THE Nation.

‘IF IT MOVED, YOU SHOT IT.’

WHITE VIGILANTE VIOLENCE AFTER KATRINA

A.C. THOMPSON

BAILOUT BUNGLING

THE EDITORS
NOMI PRINS

HOWARD DEAN’S LEGACY

ARI BERMAN

JACK SPICER’S SECOND LIFE

BARRY SCHWABSKY

JANUARY 5, 2009
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Letters

Postcard From Nebraska

Dannebrog, Neb.
Charles Kuralt gathered friends around him like a family at CBS News *Sunday Morning*. (No, people like John Leonard, Bill Geist and me were not essayists for Charles simply because of our rugged good looks!) The best description I heard of John's work was from a friend in Oklahoma who couldn't remember John's name. "You know…" he sputtered, "that guy…the one who uses big words…the one you can't understand but you can tell from the way he says it that you agree with him." We all agreed with John, even when we didn't agree with him ["John Leonard," Dec. 8].
Roger Welsch, "*Postcards From Nebraska*," Sunday Morning *(ret.)*

Knock on Wood

La Mirada, Calif.
William Deresiewicz's "How Wood Works" [Dec. 8] compelled me to read every word because it is "heroic criticism" indeed. I began at the end, then had to go back to the beginning. Hardwick, Trilling et al. would smile, as I am. Thanks for the superb analysis/critique.
Jeanne Khan

Vancouver, Wash.
William Deresiewicz is kinder to Wood than he rightly deserves, but the conclusion of the piece certainly rings true: Wood is precisely the wrong sort of standard-bearer for modern literary criticism, academic or otherwise. Our authors should be held to account for wanton navel-gazing in the name of "lifeness," and our critics should be required to avoid it at all costs.
James Walling

Portland, Ore.
William Deresiewicz did a good job of categorizing James Wood's stylistic infelicities and his limited repertoire of tropes, not to mention his limitations of vision. But one wishes that Deresiewicz's critique had been an investigation of such devastation that the subject must simply slink away. His review comes close but backs off from full dismissal, partially because of a fealty to the so-called New York intellectuals, whose only still readable member, fifty years on, is Edmund Wilson. Deresiewicz's allusion to that club underscores the closed-shop quality of New York reviewery (New Yorkers reviewing one another's books ecstatically). To the list of vital alternative writers he offers up, I would add B.R. Myers, whose all-too-infrequent reviews are exactly the down-to-earth tonic Deresiewicz appears to seek in the face of Wood's Olympian disengagement.

Wood doesn't really seem to fit *The New Yorker*; he remains more a man of *The New Republic*, where a hostility to culture continues to thrive. To *The New Yorker*, Wood has brought his ill-fitting monastic severity, kicking off his stint with a review of fellow *New Republic* scribe Robert Alter's translation of the Book of Psalms.
D.K. Holm

Lecce, Italy
James Wood isn't an American. Beside the "New York critics" he will naturally seem more detached. But his political insights are sharp. Read his *New Yorker* review of V.S. Naipaul's biography. It shows a genuine understanding of colonialism and what it meant to be a colonial in Trinidad and in Britain. Note the reference to Fanon. Decolonization is not a "purely aesthetic issue." It's the biggest event in England since World War II. For politics being separated from culture, read George Packer's review of the same biography in the *New York Times*. It makes you think Naipaul was awarded the Nobel Prize for his managing of a weird sex triangle.
Peter Byrne

Deresiewicz Replies

Portland, Ore.
D.K. Holm and Peter Byrne seem to subscribe to what might be called the geographical theory of book criticism. Holm, who apparently reads minds, assumes

(continued on page 24)

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Dumping on Detroit

We never thought we'd say this, but Dick Cheney is right. Recently he mordantly warned Senate Republicans that if they failed to pass a bailout for the auto industry, "it's Herbert Hoover time." His colleagues, apparently, can't wait. Led by Bob Corker, Mitch McConnell and Richard Shelby, they filibustered a $14 billion loan package that the majority of Congress (including forty-two members of the GOP), the Bush administration, President-elect Obama, GM, Chrysler, Ford and the UAW all supported. The immediate goal of this Gang of Three was to force wage and benefit cuts on unionized autoworkers who had already swallowed steep concessions in recent years and had offered to compromise again to keep Detroit alive. But no matter. Asserting that UAW members are "paid way above industry wages," Corker & Co. insisted that Detroit's compensation packages become "competitive" with those of foreign manufacturers on a government-mandated timeline.

EDITORIAL

This sudden fixation on competitiveness is a sham. Contrary to widely circulated claims that UAW members make an average of $73 per hour, union wages are, in fact, already in line with nonunion salaries at foreign-owned US plants. In 2007 the average UAW member made about $28 per hour, while the average American Honda or Toyota worker made $20 to $26 per hour; a new UAW hire earns as little as $14 per hour. It's UAW wages and benefits that built the American middle class, and cutting what's left of them risks plunging the country deeper into recession.

Where was the devotion to fiscal rectitude when Congress passed a $700 billion bailout for the financial sector? In October Democrats tried to implement limits on executive compensation in TARP, but as the *Washington Post* has reported, the Bush administration pushed through a last-minute loophole that restricted the enforcement mechanism to firms that sold troubled assets at government auction. Thanks to Treasury Secretary Paulson's modification of TARP, not a penny of the $335 billion committed so far has been sold at auction and not a single firm has been forced to curb executive pay. Indeed, quite the opposite: AIG—which has so far received $152 billion—has announced that it is giving "retention bonuses" to 168 executives, some of whom will receive as much as $4 million.

Unlike union wages, skyrocketing executive compensation packages are directly linked to the financial crisis, as they encouraged CEOs to downplay potential losses and risk before cashing in on inflated stock options and floating away on golden parachutes. In 2006 the average CEO earned 364 times what the average worker made (up from forty-two times more in 1980)—the largest such gap in the world. While the average CEO of a large US corporation makes about $12 million a year in salary, bonuses and stock options, his Japanese equivalent carts home a lean $1.3 million. If Congress is serious about making failed industries globally "competitive," let's start with a 90 percent pay cut for corporate executives.

Don't hold your breath waiting for one. For all the talk from Senate Republicans (and some Democrats) about fiscal responsibility, the reluctance to rescue autoworkers isn't based on economic principles of even the conservative sort. It's political and class warfare, pure and simple. "Crisis is when good things happen," Corker said during the bailout negotiations, "when you make people do things." What Senate Republicans wanted, however, was not to retool the ailing auto industry but rather, as one of their internal memos put it, to "take their first shot against organized labor, instead of taking their first blow from it."

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John Nichols: Jesse Jackson Jr.

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Nick von Hoffman: Detroit's Auto-da-fé

THE SHORT OF IT
Nick Stillman on street art

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Katrina's Untold Story

More than three years later, Hurricane Katrina still stands as a symbol of our elected officials' brutal indifference to the lives of poor African-Americans. No evacuation plan was in place for the thousands who lacked transportation; as the floodwaters rose, the elderly and the infirm, parents and children, were abandoned to drown or starve as the Department of Homeland Security slumbered. Adding insult to injury, stranded African-Americans, left on their own to scavenge desperately for food, water and dry clothes, were tarred as looters. It was not only the likes of Fox's Sean Hannity going on about the "mayhem and looting and stealing"; the *New York Times* offered up purple prose about looters who "brazenly ripped open gates and ransacked stores for food, clothing, television sets, computers, jewelry and guns, often in full view of helpless law-enforcement officials." Then–Governor Kathleen Blanco postured that her troops "know how to shoot and kill, and they are more than willing to do so if necessary." And Mayor Ray Nagin ordered 1,500 police to abandon search-and-rescue operations to target theft instead.

EDITORIAL

Our lead story in this issue, "Katrina's Hidden Race War," shows that this hysteria had grave unintended consequences. Reporter A.C. Thompson found that in the chaotic days after the storm, residents of one New Orleans community, claiming to combat "looters" and "outlaws," established a system of racist vigilante justice—and police turned a blind eye. As one vigilante said, "The police said, If they're breaking in your property do what you gotta do and leave them [the bodies] on the side of the road."

Over the course of a year and a half, Thompson walked the streets of Algiers Point, a tidy, predominantly white community on New Orleans's west bank, uncovering evidence of this violence. The accounts of the self-appointed protectors of the community and their victims converged around a stunning sequence of events. In the days after the storm, African-Americans traveling through Algiers Point on their way to a government evacuation area encountered armed patrols of white residents who menaced them at gunpoint, shouted racial epithets and ordered them to leave the neighborhood. Several were shot—the evidence collected here brings the tally to at least eleven—and some, according to the vigilantes themselves, were killed.

We believe that justice in this matter will never be served by the City of New Orleans. Thompson has been unable to ascertain that a single police investigation was opened into any of these shootings, despite efforts by some surviving victims, family members and witnesses to contact the police. His detailed queries to the New Orleans Police Department and District Attorney's office were ignored over a period of several months. The Orleans Parish coroner's office flouted local sunshine laws and refused to turn over key autopsy records until The Nation Institute's Investigative Fund filed suit.

It's not too late for accountability. Louisiana has gained a new governor since the storm, and we'll soon have a new president. Community groups should call upon Governor Bobby Jindal to lead a multiagency task force to get to the

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bottom of these crimes. In Congress, Representative John Conyers and Senator Patrick Leahy ought to make use of their subpoena power to get then–Police Chief Eddie Compass and then–District Attorney Eddie Jordan to explain their inaction; police officers posted in Algiers Point after the storm and the vigilantes themselves should face subpoenas, too. And it would be a fitting gesture if Eric Holder, once confirmed as attorney general, swiftly directed the Justice Department to open an investigation. If we as a nation are ever truly to transcend race, tolerance for racist violence in our midst must come to an end.

Throwing Good Money…

COMMENT

Three months ago, the country was galled by Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson's offhand request that taxpayers hand over billions to a tanking financial sector with no strings attached. Lawmakers keen on salvaging the bailout rushed to add amendments intended to ensure proper oversight of the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP). The bill that passed established a Congressional Oversight Panel, a tiny, underresourced but committed watchdog team that on December 10 issued its first report in the form of *Questions About the $700 Billion Emergency Economic Stabilization Funds.* The panel wrote, "We are here to ask the questions that we believe all Americans have a right to ask: who got the money, what have they done with it, how has it helped the country, and how has it helped ordinary people?"

So far, the answers are: the banks that made billions and risked more; they've stockpiled capital injections in reserves while withholding credit; and it hasn't helped any ordinary people. The Government Accountability Office put it bluntly: "Treasury has not yet set up policies and procedures to help ensure that [TARP] funds are being used as intended."

The fact is, no accountability is possible until the recipients of the bailout funds are forced to operate with the transparency that democracy requires—and this goes for TARP benefits as well as for other aid. There's a shroud of secrecy around the loan facilities set up by the Federal Reserve and other Treasury Department measures (together totaling more than $7 trillion) now propping up Wall Street. In return for loans, the Fed has taken on nearly $3 trillion in credit-risky collateral, including subprime and other underwater asset-backed securities like lower-standard mortgages, small-business loans and securitized credit card payments, none of which can be sold into the capital markets. In addition, Treasury agreed to back $1.4 trillion of FDIC guarantees if needed, and Congress voted to back a half-trillion of Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and FHA mortgages. Cash injections and backups have become regular features of federal banking policy.

All of this should be sounding alarm bells about what exactly is going on between Wall Street, the Fed and the Treasury. Yet opacity remains the rule: Bloomberg News's repeated

Noted.

BOFFO BAZZI: The **American Academy of Diplomacy**, a prestigious association of former ambassadors and senior-level diplomats, has awarded its 2008 **Arthur Ross Award** for Distinguished Reporting and Analysis to *Nation* writer **Mohamad Bazzi**, who shared this year's award with *New York Times* reporter **Dexter Filkins.** Bazzi was honored for "his keen insight and analysis," which "helps lead us to a critical understanding of the deeper currents of attitude, belief, and action in the Middle East."

FALK EXPELLED: In an unprecedented step, the Israeli government detained **Richard Falk**, the UN's special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, when he arrived at Ben-Gurion Airport on December 14 on official UN business, expelling him after a twenty-hour detention.

Falk, an international law expert (and *Nation* editorial board member), has for years been a courageous voice calling for an end to the Israeli occupation. No doubt the Israeli government was enraged by his recently released official statement, titled "Silence Is Not an Option," in which he condemned "the cruelty and unlawfulness of the Gaza blockade imposed by Israel" as "a policy of collective punishment" that "constitutes a continuing flagrant and massive violation of international humanitarian law" and a "Crime Against Humanity." Falk called on the UN to implement its "responsibility to protect" doctrine, for an investigation by the **International Criminal Court** and for the potential indictment of Israeli civilian and military leaders.

In response to Israeli government accusations that Falk was biased in favor of Palestinians, that his mandate was inherently imbalanced and that he was "legitimizing Hamas terrorism and drawing shameful comparisons to the Holocaust," Falk told *The Nation*, "My denial of entry is part of a broader pattern designed to obscure the realities of the occupation by keeping qualified observers from getting out and getting in. Israel has been playing a mind game with respect to me and others, shifting attention as much as possible to the observer and away from what is observed.… I have consistently condemned Hamas's use of rockets against civilian targets; I never compared the crimes against humanity in Gaza to the Nazi atrocities; I never asserted that the holocaust waiting to happen in Gaza was comparable or similar to the Nazi Holocaust, but only that reliance on collective punishment on such a scale had a disturbing resemblance to Nazi practices."

The UN high commissioner for human rights, **Navi Pillay**, condemned Falk's expulsion as "deeply regrettable" and said, "It is the responsibility of states to cooperate with the independent UN experts."

ROANE CAREY

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attempts to use the Freedom of Information Act to discover details of the Fed's lending program for financial firms have been stymied.

Some basic moves toward greater transparency and accountability are necessary if we are even to begin to ensure that the bailout money is not being squandered.

For starters, the firms that want to be rescued by the government must make clear their true position.

Quantifying the scope of risk and magnitude of further potential losses is key to determining a bottom-line value to this crisis. This requires more disclosure from Wall Street, including lists of assets and market prices for the assets (which are super-low, given the collapse of liquidity for these assets, but still worth knowing). Every institution that wants a loan on ridiculously good terms from the Fed or a bailout from the government should have to disclose this information. It might be an ugly number—which, like all bad news, will rattle the stock markets—but it will come out sooner or later and should be revealed now.

Second, financial firms must fully disclose the leveraging (or borrowing) in which they have engaged using these assets as collateral. They should be required to explain their leverage procedures to Congress, as well as to the Fed.

Subprime mortgages have been blamed for the financial crisis, but we're spending more than five times more money (in Fed loans, injections, bailouts and guarantees) than the value of every subprime loan in the country combined. Of the subprime loans issued during the boom years between 2003 and 2007, roughly $1.5 trillion are outstanding. If the system wasn't so leveraged, and each of them defaulted to zero (which hasn't happened), they would represent a $1.5 trillion loss. It should be clear by now that something other than subprime loans defaulting—or a "housing correction," as Paulson puts it—is wrong with the system. How were those loans packaged and leveraged into what amounts to a $140 trillion global pyramid of junk?

That is hard to answer, because the way individual loans got dispersed multiple times throughout the global financial system is not transparent. Still, if legitimate borrowers were allowed to renegotiate payable loan terms (and stay in their homes), certain related losses propagated by the existing financial framework would cease. FDIC head Sheila Bair adopted this strategy when the FDIC took over failed Pasadena-based bank IndyMac, and she suggested a similar one to stop 1.5 million foreclosures at a $24.4 billion cost, yet TARP funds have not been opened to this more see-through approach.

Indeed, instead of having to explain their leveraging procedures, the most leveraged companies are getting the best deal. Former investment banks Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley were allowed to become bank holding companies, thereby widening the net for which the government is on the hook, and giving them the same status as consumer-oriented institutions. These were the same companies that got the SEC to approve their ability to leverage themselves thirty to one, instead of twelve to one. They are inhaling the Fed lending facilities and government bailout money and brokering new FDIC-backed bonds, even though they created their own problems. Instead of egging them on, the SEC should be reducing the high leverage ratios that still exist.

During a time of supreme weakness and lack of transparency, it's an especially bad idea for the government to allow institutions that were already "too big to fail" to merge with other institutions, thereby creating bigger, riskier firms. But in the cases of Bank of America–Merrill Lynch, Wells Fargo–Wachovia and JPMorganChase–Washington Mutual, that is what has been happening. Other mergers are in discussion. Not only will their enhanced size prove a bigger risk to the public if they fail; their merged balance sheets will by definition be more difficult to understand and monitor, even if the current regulatory structure was effective.

Instead, we should be talking actively about reregulating the banking industry and maintaining financial entities in manageable pieces. Before it was gutted by deregulation, the Glass-Steagall Act protected the government and taxpayers by isolating rather than combining risky firms with more consumer-oriented ones. Perhaps the exact details of the 1933 legislation would require modification, but reviving its essence would go a long way toward solving this financial crisis—and avoiding future ones.

NOMI PRINS

Nomi Prins is a senior fellow at Demos, a nonpartisan public policy think tank. A former managing director for Goldman Sachs, she is the author of Other People's Money: The Corporate Mugging of America *and* Jacked: How "Conservatives" Are Picking Your Pocket.

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

The People in Charge

The people in charge of the bailout attempts
Now constantly change how the effort is skewed.
They're titans of Wall Street and finance and such.
Remember when they were the guys who seemed
shrewd?

Obama's Hawk

COMMENT

In the spring of 1971, a young Marine captain named James L. Jones stood guard as part of a phalanx surrounding the Capitol, with shoot-to-kill orders should antiwar protesters try to storm the building. According to *Boys of '67*, a recently published biography written by his cousin, Jones, a decorated Vietnam combat officer, brooded about "the Jane Fondas and Jerry Rubins of the world" as he scanned the marchers for any sign of a long-haired Navy lieutenant, John Kerry, whose condemnation of atrocities by US troops rankled him. In Vietnam Jones had served as aide-de-camp to gung-ho Maj. Gen. Raymond Davis, whose plan for defeating North Vietnam included "invading Laos, Cambodia, and the DMZ," said Jones sympathetically.

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Jones was troubled when he found out that his sister Diane, nine years his junior and a student at Tufts University, had been among the throng of protesters that day in 1971. When their father, also a retired marine, made light of the differences between Jim and Diane, the younger Jones erupted. "OK, Dad, how would you have liked it if Uncle Vernon had wrapped himself in a Japanese flag while the Marines were out in the Pacific?"

Today Jones—a retired general and former Marine commandant who headed the US European Command and was commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—will be at Obama's elbow in the White House as national security adviser. It's hard to imagine a less likely choice to be Obama's go-to guy on foreign policy. Hillary Clinton, Obama's nominee for secretary of state, and Robert Gates, his nominee for defense secretary, are already widely considered to be tough-minded hawks. But Jones is probably the most hawkish of all, and he seems least compatible with Obama.

That Jones has reached the pinnacle of the Washington power elite is testimony to his long-proven ability to operate in the corridors of power. The Republican-leaning Jones was introduced to Washington's political world in 1979 by John McCain, who was serving as the Navy's liaison to the Senate. McCain took Jones, who'd just been appointed as the Marines' liaison, under his wing, and the 36-year-old Jones, by then a major, took avidly to politicking with the senators, cultivating ties to a freshman Republican from Maine, William Cohen. Ten years later during another stint on Capitol Hill, Jones bonded with Cohen.

After serving in the Gulf War and Bosnia in the 1990s, having risen to colonel and then three-star general, Jones's connection with Cohen paid off: when the latter became President Clinton's defense secretary, Cohen picked Jones for the plum post of his military assistant. Cohen lauds his loyal aide: "Jones knew where all the bodies were buried, and made sure mine wasn't one of them," he said recently. Jones, who retired from the Marines two years ago, has remained close friends with McCain. Jones made an appearance in Missouri with the Arizona senator in June, after he had clinched the GOP presidential nomination.

Jones is a fierce advocate of NATO expansion. As commander of the alliance from 2003 to 2006, he pushed for it to take greater responsibility for securing oil supplies in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. "Our activities are definitely moving to the East and to the South," he declared, speaking to the National Press Club in 2006. He pushed NATO hard—encountering stiff resistance from European allies—to strengthen its commitment to Afghanistan, and he got NATO involved with training missions in Iraq too. No longer, he says, can NATO confine itself to the defense of Europe; it must increasingly engage in out-of-area operations. "The term 'out of area' doesn't really apply anymore, because that geographical restriction has faded into history," he told the Council on Foreign Relations in 2006. "NATO's also getting ready to certify a NATO response force, which is also a new operational concept that will give the alliance much more flexible capability to do things rapidly at very long distances."

In 2007 Jones became president of the US Chamber of Commerce's Institute for 21st Century Energy, meanwhile joining the boards of directors of Chevron and Boeing. Among the eighty-eight recommendations of the institute—including, naturally, Drill, baby, drill!—is this: "The U.S. government should engage the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on energy security challenges and encourage member countries to support the expansion of its mandate to address energy security."

Jones pays lip service to Obama's oft-stated campaign pledge to pull US combat forces out of Iraq over sixteen months. Not long ago, however, Jones was of a different mind. "I think deadlines can work against us," he said in 2007. "And I think a deadline of this magnitude would be against our national interest." His views on Iraq during the run-up to the war aren't known, though it's reasonable to assume that, like Gen. Anthony Zinni, a former Centcom commander, Jones was skeptical of the neoconservative-promoted war. According to Bob Woodward's *State of Denial*, in 2005 Jones warned the man who was soon to be chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen. Peter Pace, that he faced a "debacle" in Iraq. But when many retired generals began to denounce the Bush administration's Iraq policy in 2006, Jones pointedly demurred. "I do not associate myself with the so-called 'revolt of the generals,'" he said.

Regarding Afghanistan, where Jones is a proponent of a troop surge, he's shown himself to be credulous at best. Repeatedly over the past three years he's touted the view that a newly arriving brigade would turn the tide, Vietnam-like, and repel the Taliban. And time and again he's cast doubt upon the plain-as-day fact that the Taliban are resurgent. It is worrying—again echoing hawkish arguments about the Vietnam War—that he links failure in Iraq and Afghanistan to loss of face: "I personally don't believe that the United States can afford to be perceived as having not been successful in either Iraq or Afghanistan, and I think the consequences for such a perception or such a reality will be with us for years to come in terms of our ability to be a nation of great influence in the twenty-first century."

As Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, Jones also sought increased engagement of US and NATO forces in Africa, and he strongly supported creation of the controversial new US Africa Command. "Africa is a continent of growing strategic importance," he said. Two years before the establishment of that command, Jones was enthusiastic. "My staff at EUCOM spends more than half of its time on African issues," he acknowledged.

Some of Jones's supporters point to his 2007–08 role as special envoy on Palestinian security issues as a hopeful sign that he will encourage Obama to confront the Israel lobby. Palestinian negotiators praise Jones's patience and willingness to listen to their complaints, and a report that he prepared after his mission, said to be critical of the Israeli army's role in the West Bank—it "makes Israel look very bad," said the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*—was suppressed by the Bush administration.

But that's a slim reed for hope. While Jones is deeply familiar with the Middle East and South Asia, and is a fluent French speaker who lived in Paris for fifteen years during his youth, in the end he's the military's guy. He's the proverbial hammer in search of nails. "He's not a strategic thinker," says a prominent military analyst in Washington. But when Obama needs a hammer, he'll have one conveniently nearby. ROBERT DREYFUSS

Robert Dreyfuss is a Nation *contributing editor.*

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Alexander Cockburn

'A Giant Ponzi Scheme'

We need the brush of Caravaggio to depict the awful scene where—at least on their lawyer's account—the sons of Bernard Madoff confronted the errant paterfamilias, who informed his offspring that the cupboard was bare, the investors had been duped and all these years he'd been running "a giant Ponzi scheme." But this time, reversing Caravaggio's terrifying image, it was the old man who was bowed over the sacrificial rock and the sons with knives raised to dispatch their white-haired progenitor, turning him in to the FBI. Of course, there have been unkind souls eager to suggest that the three men had been working cheek by jowl for twenty years and that Bernie and his boys were in cahoots on the triage as an exercise in damage limitation. To such cynics I say, "Pshaw!"

On the other hand, I lend a more receptive ear to those who say that at least some of Madoff Sr.'s clients were not so naïve as to believe he had a virtuous investment model that permitted him to report 10–12 percent annual returns on capital invested, through boom and bust. They thought Madoff indeed had a secret model, but one coming in the distinctly unvirtuous form of insider information.

The most gullible marks are those who preen themselves as being privileged accomplices in a profitable conspiracy where they have no personal exposure to legal sanctions. Madoff's prosperous victims fatally miscalculated the dimension of the swindle. As instruction on how to get through life in one piece, Madoffgate is proof of the old rule: the more elegant the tailoring, the more handsomely silvered the distinguished locks, the more innocently rubicund the visage, the more likely the hand covertly fishing for one's wallet.

On the larger canvas, what exactly separates Madoff's operation from those of the banks rewarded for their shady follies by a $700 billion bailout? Just like Madoff, the banks finally had to admit that all their public financial statements were false, that the supposed assets were worthless. Unlike Madoff, who looted his clients of a mere $50 billion, they were "too big to fail."

The operating assumption of the Ponzi scheme is that the tide will always rise, that old investors can be repaid by the infusions ponied up by the fresh recruits. For the past twenty years the entire American economy has become—to quote again Bernie's succinct résumé of his business—"a giant Ponzi scheme," bloating out like the metastasizing planet described by Stanislaw Lem in his strange science fiction novel *Solaris*.

Uncle Sam is the biggest Ponzi operator of all. Bernie had to constantly replenish his fund with new deposits. So does Uncle Sam, wheedling more money out of the Chinese, the Indians, the Japanese and poor Third World nations forced to pony up at the point of a gun. But in the end Uncle Sam has one huge asset denied Madoff, who seems to have stopped short of the straightforward forgery allegedly practiced by Marc Dreier, the Manhattan lawyer arrested in Canada for trying to sell nonexistent bonds to the tune of $380 million. Uncle Sam has the printing press to run off the necessary dollars. He's certainly going to need lots of fresh new bills. You can set your clock now for the alarms scheduled to go off all the way through Obama-time: credit card debt, commercial real estate implosion, option-ARM financing.

Maybe Madoff, trolling for suckers in the Palm Beach Country Club and the Jewish charitable foundations, will become the sacrificial symbol of Wall Street thievery, sent off to the penitentiary in lieu of the real big-timers. I guess the silver lining is that anti-Semitic grumbles about the Jews taking the country to the cleaners can be trumped by pointing out that many of Madoff's victims are Jewish. I must add that Madoff's looting of the bequest giving Elie Wiesel's Ethics Essay Prize has come as a ray of warmth amid the winter darkness, a conclusive demonstration of the existence of one God at least.

In tandem with Madoff's symbolic role, Rod Blagojevich is carrying the can for the way politicians get elected in America. If his was felonious conduct, shouldn't 98 percent of all elected officials in this country be behind bars? The American political system is fueled by campaign contributions and corresponding quid pro quos. Politicians are elected to deliver services. They need money to get elected. The people who need services give it to them. That's the way the system works.

The *Washington Post* congratulates Obama for steering clear of the slime of Chicago politics, but what actually happened is that Obama moved to richer pastures. Not for him Tony Rezko's dingy billfold but the dignity of anticipatory bri… uh, campaign contributions from the Pritzkers, the Crown family, the big ethanol interests in the Midwest, the nuclear industry and Wall Street financiers, the biggest of big-time money, now gratefully acknowledged in the form of Obama's cabinet appointments. Obama raised more money than any presidential candidate in American history, with nary a squeak from the liberals about his de facto destruction of campaign finance reform.

Amid the hubbub over the arrest of Blago, the *New York Times* ran a piece on December 14 by Eric Lipton and Raymond Hernandez about Senator Charles Schumer's version of pay-to-play. Unlike Blago, Schumer moved from talk to action. Amid the bailout negotiations he went to a Democratic Party fundraiser in New York and addressed some twenty of the heaviest Wall Street hitters. He "offered some reassurance," wrote the *Times* reporters. "The businessmen could count on the Democrats to help steer the nation through the financial turmoil.… The message clearly resonated. The next week, executives at firms represented at the breakfast sent in more than $135,000 in campaign donations." Of course, Madoff sent Schumer individual campaign contributions down the years, recycling some of his clients' money for the worthy purpose of choking off any untoward regulatory zeal on the part of New York's senior senator. All legal and not even a four-letter word. ■

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Katha Pollitt

'Tis the Season to Be Generous

Money's tight this year, I know. But tradition is tradition. So here's my annual list of suggestions for your end-of-year donations. Read on to learn about some great groups that help people who are worse off than you are.

1. **Commune des Femmes de Kamanyola (CFK).** Ann Jones's recent *Nation* story about the horrific wartime rapes, often followed by mutilation if not murder, of hundreds of thousands of women in Congo highlighted the work of this grassroots organization. Founded by a mother who refused to accept in shame and silence her teenage daughter's rape by soldiers, CFK takes rape victims to the hospital for treatment and drugs to prevent STDs, HIV and pregnancy; pressures their families to accept them; works to prosecute rapists; and educates communities that rape is not men's right—or women's fault. Make your check out to IRC, with CFK on the memo line. Address: Heidi Lehmann, director, Gender-Based Violence Unit, International Rescue Committee, 122 East 42nd St., New York, NY 10168-1289.

2. **Bronx Freedom Fund.** This year-old organization posts bail for indigent people awaiting trial on misdemeanor or nonviolent felony charges in New York City's poorest borough. These are men and women who without the fund would languish in jail for perhaps six months for lack of $500, including many who are innocent and would plead guilty just to be free. Of all clients bailed out, 95 percent have returned for every court appearance and half have had their cases dismissed. Bonus: money used to post bail is returned when the cases are over, so a single gift can keep on giving. Address: 860 Courtlandt Ave., Bronx, NY 10451; BronxFreedomFund.org.

3. **Iraq Veterans Against the War.** The little group you supported last year through donations to Vietnam Veterans Against the War has doubled in size and is walking on its own. Help IVAW organize vets and soldiers against the Iraq occupation, develop support networks for war resisters, present Winter Soldier testimonies about the Iraq and Afghanistan occupations, and run truth-in-recruiting education in schools. IVAW supports reparations for the Iraqi people and full benefits for returning vets, including mental healthcare. Address: Box 8296, Philadelphia, PA 19101; ivaw.org.

4. **Resurrection After Exoneration.** An outgrowth of The Innocence Project of New Orleans, RAE is run by John Thompson, who spent eighteen years on Louisiana's death row after being wrongfully convicted, and provides housing, training and life opportunities to innocent people released from prison. Did you know that Louisiana has one of the highest exoneration rates in the country as well as the highest per capita rate of incarceration, with a recidivism rate of almost 50 percent? You can help exonerees start to rebuild the life the state did its best to destroy. Address: 636 Baronne St., New Orleans, LA 70113; r-a-e.org.

5. **Health in Harmony.** Two years ago, *Nation* readers helped kick-start this small group with a big idea: provide poor Indonesian villagers with healthcare in return for giving up illegal logging in the gorgeous, fragile rainforests of Gunung Palung National Park. It's working. People and nature can flourish together, with your help. Address: 6114 La Salle Ave., Suite 752, Oakland, CA 94611; healthinharmony.org.

6. **The Lambi Fund of Haiti.** This year's hurricanes have devastated Haiti's poor and deforested countryside. The Lambi Fund works with grassroots groups to plant trees, start organic vegetable gardens, give pigs and goats to malnourished families, build cisterns to provide safe drinking water and teach methods of farming that prevent the erosion that has made recent storms so deadly. Building women's leadership is a part of everything they do. A dollar goes a long way in Haiti. I'm just saying. Address: Box 18955, Washington, DC 20036; lambifund.org.

7. **Godparents Association.** Founded in 1998 by a Ugandan and an American, this group helps Ugandan girls who resist female genital mutilation by sponsoring their education so they can grow up and change their culture from within. It's working: the first girls have gone on to become nurses, midwives and, just this year, graduates of Kampala University. $575 pays one year's tuition for one girl (or boy—because men need to be part of ending this tradition). Smaller donations are welcome, too. Address: 409 Waldemere Ave., Bridgeport, CT 06604; godparents.net.

8. **Women for Afghan Women.** As I've written in previous years, WAW does on a shoestring the work that is the only way to bring peace, democracy and progress to ordinary Afghans: clinics, schools, women's councils, orphan sponsorship (only $50 a month—think about it!), small-scale economic projects that simultaneously let a woman feed her family and improve her status within it. WAW fights forced marriage, domestic violence, rape and other abuses of women's human rights. If you're disturbed by the resurgence of the Taliban, this is the way to fight them. Address: 32-17 College Point Blvd., Room 206, Flushing, NY 11354; womenforafghanwomen.org.

9. **Donorschoose.org.** This web-based organization lets you choose among thousands of public-school classroom projects—maybe one in a school in your neighborhood. Books, musical instruments, sports equipment, class trips, calculators, paper—paper?! It's truly shocking how many essentials kids are expected to do without. Gift certificates make a great last-minute present.

10. **The Modest Needs Foundation.** For struggling low-income people, one unexpected event—an illness, a fire, a car that dies, a missed child-support payment—can quickly lead to poverty, even homelessness. MNF stops that process by offering financial help up to $1,000. The website (modestneeds.org) lets you decide where your donation goes. In these harsh economic times, there's probably no better way to offer a lifeline to a stranger. ■

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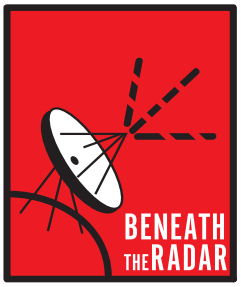
Gary Younge

A Woman Against the System

Detroit

On election day James Willingham, 42, was driving home from the polls in Detroit around 3:30 PM on his motorcycle when he was allegedly hit by a police car with such force that he struck and killed a pedestrian, Jeffrey Frazier, and then crashed into a pole and died from the impact.

When Diane Bukowski, a white journalist for the black newspaper *Michigan Citizen*, heard the news on a black radio station, she rushed to the scene on the corner of Justine and East Davison. The first print reporter to arrive, she showed her credentials and started taking photographs. A female state trooper yelled at her from across the street, "Who the fuck do you think you are?" Bukowski again identified herself as a journalist. "I didn't cross any police tape," says Bukowski. "I was just doing my job." The trooper grabbed the camera, deleted the photos, handcuffed Bukowski, arrested her on a single misdemeanor count of obstructing an investigation and took her to state police headquarters, where she was held for about an hour.



And so it was that as the polls were closing in Michigan and the nation began to bask in the warm glow of a postracial society, a white woman was cuffed and fingerprinted because she tried to tell the world about two black men who had just been killed.

For all the dreamy talk of the journey we are on to transcend race, only a handful like Bukowski are actually paying for the ticket. Not just because she's a white woman who works for a black newspaper and got arrested, or because the victims she was writing about were black, but because she is a white person who is prepared to take on the mess that white supremacy has built.

Extinguishing race as a meaningful category demands that we first get rid of the racism that gives it meaning. In that respect, the symbolic resonance of election night in Chicago—joyous as it was—can be understood only within the systemic neglect and harassment of that fateful afternoon in Detroit. The two scenes do not contradict but complement each other. A black man in the White House seemed so unlikely precisely because a black man in prison or dead at the hands of the police is so much more likely. What individuals do in the privacy of the polling booth pleasantly surprised some of us; but the outrageous things institutions do in plain sight no longer turn heads. Race describes the protagonists; power shapes the narrative.

"I'm happy that Barack Obama got elected," says Arnold Reed, Bukowski's attorney. "It's a start. But he's not the savior. He's not standing on the corner of Justine and Davison. The battle that transcends race in this country is between those who have and those who have not. Diane's reports have given a voice to those who have not."

Bukowski cuts an intriguing figure. An insatiable gum-chewer, she strides through the roughest areas of black Detroit in single-minded pursuit of her stories. She is 60 years old and stands at around 5 feet 4 inches. A few days after her arrest, her charge was ramped up to five felony counts of assaulting, wounding, battering, resisting, obstructing or endangering five troopers, carrying up to ten years in prison. The idea of this small woman single-handedly battering five armed troopers would be funny if it weren't so absurd. The charges were reduced to two troopers following a preliminary exam.

The police claim they didn't hit Willingham. They say the accident on election day occurred when Willingham raced away from them on a stolen motorcycle after they tried to pull him over for speeding.

Given a choice between their account and Bukowski's, I know which one I would believe. For we have met Bukowski in these pages before [see "Shots in the Dark," July 2, 2007]. She reported on the murder of Brandon Martell Moore for the *Michigan Citizen*. Brandon, 16, was shot in the back by an off-duty cop as he left a mall. Brandon had never been in trouble with the law before. But the cop who shot him had. In 1971 Eugene Williams, who is black, was involved in a fatal hit-and-run accident while under the influence of alcohol. In 1979 Williams shot and killed a 31-year-old man during a neighborhood brawl. Five years later he shot his wife, but she lived. Williams stayed on the force. The senseless death of a black teenager at the hand of a wayward cop is clearly not a newsworthy story in Detroit. The city's two main newspapers needed less than 200 words to write up the whole story in which they failed even to mention Brandon's name and quoted only the police.

Were it not for Bukowski, who pursued the case relentlessly, Brandon would have died without a trace. Thanks to her reporting, the community demanded answers.

So there is a reason the Detroit police don't like Bukowski. She refuses to let them do their job the way they see fit. During her years at the *Citizen* she has broken several stories, including one about the "Booty Boys"—police on Detroit's Southwest side were conducting illegal cavity searches of black men in public on city streets. She also broke the story of Eugene Brown, a cop who ran amok in black areas during the '90s. Her work was used by federal authorities when they imposed a consent decree on Detroit police. Nonetheless, all these police officers, most of whom are black, remain on the force. "This is clearly an attempt to intimidate me," says Bukowski of her arrest. "They are trying to cover up what happened." Without her, they would get away with murder, literally.

At Detroit's 36th District court, where Bukowski's preliminary exam was heard, almost everyone is black—the public defenders, judges, security guards, defendants, cashiers, stenographers, ushers. Once the system is up and running, the race of those who operate it is as secondary as the race of those who fight it. ■

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Katrina's Hidden Race War

In New Orleans's Algiers Point, white vigilantes shot African-Americans with impunity.

by A.C. THOMPSON

The way Donnell Herrington tells it, there was no warning. One second he was trudging through the heat. The next he was lying prostrate on the pavement, his life spilling out of a hole in his throat, his body racked with pain, his vision blurred and distorted.

It was September 1, 2005, some three days after Hurricane Katrina crashed into New Orleans, and somebody had just blasted Herrington, who is African-American, with a shotgun. "I just hit the ground. I didn't even know what happened," recalls Herrington, a burly 32-year-old with a soft drawl.

The sudden eruption of gunfire horrified Herrington's companions—his cousin Marcel Alexander, then 17, and friend Chris Collins, then 18, who are also black. "I looked at Donnell and he had this big old hole in his neck," Alexander recalls. "I tried to help him up, and they started shooting again." Herrington says he was staggering to his feet when a second shotgun blast struck him from behind; the spray of lead pellets also caught Collins and Alexander. The buckshot peppered Alexander's back, arm and buttocks.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHANDRA McCORMICK AND KEITH CALHOUN

A vigilante shot Donnell Herrington twice shortly after Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans.

Herrington shouted at the other men to run and turned to face his attackers: three armed white males. Herrington says he hadn't even seen the men or their weapons before the shooting began. As Alexander and Collins fled, Herrington ran in the opposite direction, his hand pressed to the bleeding wound on his throat. Behind him, he says, the gunmen yelled, "Get him! Get that nigger!"

The attack occurred in Algiers Point. The Point, as locals call it, is a neighborhood within a neighborhood, a small cluster of ornate, immaculately maintained 150-year-old houses within the larger Algiers district. A nationally recognized historic area, Algiers Point is largely white, while the rest of Algiers is predominantly black. It's a "white enclave" whose residents have "a kind of siege mentality," says Tulane University historian Lance Hill, noting that some white New Orleanians "think of themselves as an oppressed minority."

A wide street lined with towering trees, Opelousas Avenue marks the dividing line between Algiers Point and greater Algiers, and the difference in wealth between the two areas is immediately noticeable. "On one side of Opelousas it's 'hood, on the other side it's suburbs," says one local. "The two sides are totally opposite, like muddy and clean."

Algiers Point has always been somewhat isolated: it's perched on the west bank of the Mississippi River, linked to the core of the city only by a ferry line and twin gray steel bridges. When the hurricane descended on Louisiana, Algiers Point got off relatively easy. While wide swaths of New Orleans were deluged, the levees ringing Algiers Point withstood the Mississippi's surging currents, preventing flooding; most homes and businesses in the area survived intact. As word spread that the area was dry, desperate people began heading toward the west bank, some walking over bridges, others traveling by boat. The National Guard soon designated the Algiers Point ferry landing an official evacuation site. Rescuers from the Coast Guard and other agencies brought flood victims to the ferry terminal, where soldiers loaded them onto buses headed for Texas.

Facing an influx of refugees, the residents of Algiers Point could have pulled together food, water and medical supplies for the flood victims. Instead, a group of white residents, convinced that crime would arrive with the human exodus, sought to seal off the area, blocking the roads in and out of the neighborhood by dragging lumber and downed trees into the streets. They stockpiled handguns, assault rifles, shotguns and at least one Uzi and began patrolling the streets in pickup trucks and SUVs. The

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newly formed militia, a loose band of about fifteen to thirty residents, most of them men, all of them white, was looking for thieves, outlaws or, as one member put it, anyone who simply "didn't belong."

The existence of this little army isn't a secret—in 2005 a few newspaper reporters wrote up the group's activities in glowing terms in articles that showed up on an array of pro-gun blogs; one Cox News story called it "the ultimate neighborhood watch." Herrington, for his part, recounted his ordeal in Spike Lee's documentary *When the Levees Broke*. But until now no one has ever seriously scrutinized what happened in Algiers Point during those days, and nobody has asked the obvious questions. Were the gunmen, as they claim, just trying to fend off looters? Or does Herrington's experience point to a different, far uglier truth?

Over the course of an eighteen-month investigation, I tracked down figures on all sides of the gunfire, speaking with the shooters of Algiers Point, gunshot survivors and those who witnessed the bloodshed. I interviewed police officers, forensic pathologists, firefighters, historians, medical doctors and private citizens, and studied more than 800 autopsies and piles of state death records. What emerged was a disturbing picture of New Orleans in the days after the storm, when the city fractured along racial fault lines as its government collapsed.

Herrington, Collins and Alexander's experience fits into a broader pattern of violence in which, evidence indicates, at least eleven people were shot. In each case the targets were African-American men, while the shooters, it appears, were all white.

The new information should reframe our understanding of the catastrophe. Immediately after the storm, the media portrayed African-Americans as looters and thugs—Mayor Ray Nagin, for example, told Oprah Winfrey that "hundreds of gang members" were marauding through the Superdome. Now it's clear that some of the most serious crimes committed during that time were the work of gun-toting white males.

So far, their crimes have gone unpunished. No one was ever arrested for shooting Herrington, Alexander and Collins—in fact, there was never an investigation. I found this story repeated over and over during my days in New Orleans. As a reporter who has spent more than a decade covering crime, I was startled to meet so many people with so much detailed information about potentially serious offenses, none of whom had ever been interviewed by police detectives.

Hill, who runs Tulane's Southern Institute for Education and Research and closely follows the city's racial dynamics, isn't surprised the Algiers Point gunmen have eluded arrest. Because of the widespread notion that blacks engaged in looting and thuggery as the disaster unfolded, Hill believes, many white New Orleanians approved of the vigilante activity that occurred in places like Algiers Point. "By and large, I think the white mentality is that these people are exempt—that even if they committed these crimes, they're really exempt from any kind of legal repercussion," Hill tells me. "It's sad to say, but I think that if any of these cases went to trial, and none of them have, I can't see a white person being convicted of any kind of crime against an African-American during that period."

A.C. Thompson's reporting on New Orleans was directed and underwritten by the Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute. Thompson is an award-winning journalist on the staff of ProPublica, which provided additional support, as did the Center for Investigative Reporting and New America Media.

You can trace the origins of the Algiers Point militia to the misfortune of Vinnie Pervel. A 52-year-old building contractor and real estate entrepreneur with a graying buzz cut and mustache, Pervel says he lost his Ford van in a carjacking the day after Katrina made landfall, when an African-American man attacked him with a hammer. "The kid whacked me," recalls Pervel, who is white. "Hit me on the side of the head." Vowing to prevent further robberies, Pervel and his neighbors began amassing an arsenal. "For a day and a half we were running around getting guns," he says. "We got about forty."

While the media portrayed blacks as looters and thugs, some of the most serious crimes committed were the work of gun-toting white males.

Things quickly got ugly. Pervel remembers aiming a shotgun at a random African-American man walking by his home—even though he knew the man had no connection to the theft of his vehicle. "I don't want you passing by my house!" Pervel says he shouted out.

Pervel tells me he feared goons would kill his mother, who is in her 70s. "We thought we would be dead," he says. "We thought we were doomed." And so Pervel and his comrades set about fortifying the area. One resident gave me video footage of the leafy barricades the men constructed to keep away outsiders. Others told me they created a low-tech alarm system, tying aluminum cans and glass bottles together and stringing them across the roads at ankle height. The bottles and cans would rattle noisily if somebody bumped into them, alerting the militia.

Pervel and his armed neighbors point to the very real chaos that was engulfing the city and claim they had no other choice than to act as they did. They paint themselves as righteous defenders of property, a paramilitary formation protecting their neighborhood from opportunistic thieves. "I'm not a racist," Pervel insists. "I'm a classist. I want to live around people who want the same things as me."

Nathan Roper, another vigilante, says he was unhappy that outsiders were disturbing his corner of New Orleans and that he was annoyed by the National Guard's decision to use the Algiers Point ferry landing as an evacuation zone. "I'm telling you, it was forty, fifty people at a time getting off these boats," says Roper, who is in his 50s and works for ServiceMaster, a house-cleaning company. The storm victims were "hoodlums from the Lower Ninth Ward and that part of the city," he says. "I'm not a prejudiced individual, but you just know the outlaws who are up to no good. You can see it in their eyes."

The militia, according to Roper, was armed with "handguns, rifles [and] shotguns"; he personally carried "a .38 in my waistband" and a "little Uzi." "There was a few people who

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got shot around here," Roper, a slim man with a weathered face, tells me. "I know of at least three people who got shot. I know one was dead 'cause he was on the side of the road."

During the summer of 2005 Herrington was working as an armored-car driver for the Brink's company and living in a rented duplex about a mile from Algiers Point. Katrina thrashed the place, blowing out windows, pitching a hefty pine tree limb through the roof and dumping rain on Herrington's possessions. On the day of the shooting, Herrington, Alexander and Collins were all trying to escape the stricken city, and set out together on foot for the Algiers Point ferry terminal in the hopes of getting on an evacuation bus.

'They said they was gonna tie us up, put us in the back of the truck and burn us. They was gonna make us suffer.' —Marcel Alexander

Those hopes were dashed by a barrage of shotgun pellets. After two shots erupted, Collins and Alexander took off running and ducked into a shed behind a house to hide from the gunmen, Alexander tells me. The armed men, he says, discovered them in the shed and jammed pistols in their faces, yelling, "We got you niggers! We got you niggers!" He continues, "They said they was gonna tie us up, put us in the back of the truck and burn us. They was gonna make us suffer.... I thought I was gonna die. I thought I was gonna leave earth."

Apparently thinking they'd caught some looters, the gunmen interrogated and verbally threatened Collins and Alexander for ten to fifteen minutes, Alexander says, before one of the armed men issued an ultimatum: if Alexander and Collins left Algiers Point and told their friends not to set foot in the area, they'd be allowed to live.

Meanwhile, Herrington was staring at death. "I was bleeding pretty bad from my neck area," he recalls. When two white men drove by in a black pickup truck, he begged them for help. "I said, Help me, help me—I'm shot," Herrington recalls. The response, he tells me, was immediate and hostile. One of the men told Herrington, "Get away from this truck, nigger. We're not gonna help you. We're liable to kill you ourselves." My God, thought Herrington, what's going on out here?

He managed to stumble back to a neighbor's house, collapsing on the front porch. The neighbors, an African-American couple, wrapped him in a sheet and sped him to the nearest hospital, the West Jefferson Medical Center, where, medical records show, he was X-rayed at 3:30 PM. According to the records, a doctor who reviewed the X-rays found "metallic buckshot" scattered throughout his chest, arms, back and abdomen, as well as "at least seven [pellets] in the right neck." Within minutes, Herrington was wheeled into an operating room for emergency surgery.

"It was a close-range buckshot wound from a shotgun," says Charles Thomas, one of the doctors who operated on Herrington. "If he hadn't gotten to the hospital, he wouldn't have lived. He had a hole in his internal jugular vein, and we were able to find it and fix it."

After three days in the hospital, which lacked running water, air conditioning and functional toilets, Herrington was shuttled to a medical facility in Baton Rouge. When he returned to New Orleans months later, he paid a visit to the Fourth District police station, whose officers patrol the west bank, and learned there was no police report documenting the attack. Herrington, who now has a wide scar stretching the length of his neck, says the officers he spoke with failed to take a report or check out his story, a fact that still bothers him. "If the shoe was on the other foot, if a black guy was willing to go out shooting white guys, the police would be up there real quick," he says. "I feel these guys should definitely be held accountable. These guys had absolutely no right to do what they did."

Herrington, Alexander and Collins are the only victims, so far, to tell their stories. But they certainly weren't the only ones attacked in or around Algiers Point. In interviews, vigilantes and residents—citing the exact locations and types of weapons used—detail a string of violent incidents in which at least eight other people were shot, bringing the total number of shooting victims to at least eleven, some of whom may have died.

Other evidence bolsters this tally. Thomas, the surgeon who treated Herrington, staffed one of the few functioning trauma centers in the area, located just outside the New Orleans city line, not far from Algiers Point, for a full month after the hurricane hit. "We saw a bunch of gunshot wounds," he tells me. "There were a lot of gunshot wounds that went unreported during that time." Though Thomas couldn't get into the specifics of the shooting incidents because of medical privacy laws, he says, "We saw a couple of other shotgun wounds, some handgun shootings and somebody who was shot with a high-velocity missile [an assault-rifle round]." The surgeon remembers handling "five or six nonfatal gunshot wounds" as well as three lethal gunshot cases.

In addition, state death records show that at least four people died in and around Algiers Point, a suspicious number, given that most Katrina fatalities were the result of drowning, and that the community never flooded. Neighborhood residents, black and white, remember seeing corpses lying out in the open that appeared to have been shot.

While the militia patrolled the streets of Algiers Point, the New Orleans Police Department, which had done little to brace for the storm, was crippled. "There was no leadership, no equipment, no nothing," recalls one high-ranking police official. "We did no more to prepare for a hurricane than we would have for a thunderstorm." Without functioning radios or dispatch systems, officers had no way of knowing what was happening a block away, let alone on the other side of the city. NOPD higher-ups had no way to give direction to unit commanders and other subordinates. As the chain of command disintegrated, the force dissolved into a collection of isolated, quasi-autonomous bands.

Around Algiers Point people say they rarely saw cops during the week after Katrina tore through Louisiana, and in this

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law enforcement vacuum the militia's unique brand of justice flourished. Most disturbing, one of the vigilantes, Roper, claims on videotape recorded just weeks after the storm that the shootings took place with the knowledge and consent of the police. "The police said, If they're breaking in your property do what you gotta do and leave them [the bodies] on the side of the road," he says.

As we drive through Algiers Point in a battered white van, Roper tells me he witnessed a fatal shooting. Roper says he was talking on his cellphone to his son in Lafayette one evening when he spied an African-American man trying to get into Daigle's Grocery, a corner market on the eastern edge of the neighborhood, which was shuttered because of the hurricane. Another militia member shot the man from a few feet away, killing him. "He was done," Roper recalls.

During our conversations, Roper never acknowledges firing his weapon, but in 2005 a Danish documentary crew videotaped him talking about his activities. In this footage Roper says, when pressed, that he did indeed shoot somebody.

Fellow militia member Wayne Janak, 60, a carpenter and contractor, is more forthcoming with me. "Three people got shot in just one day!" he tells me, laughing. We're sitting in his home, a boxy beige-and-pink structure on a corner about five blocks from Daigle's Grocery. "Three of them got hit right here in this intersection with a riot gun," he says, motioning toward the streets outside his home. Janak tells me he assumed the shooting victims, who were African-American, were looters because they were carrying sneakers and baseball caps with them. He guessed that the property had been stolen from a nearby shopping mall. According to Janak, a neighbor "unloaded a riot gun"—a shotgun—"on them. We chased them down."

Janak, who was carrying a pistol, says he grabbed one of the suspected looters and considered killing him, but decided to be merciful. "I rolled him over in the grass and saw that he'd been hit in the back with the riot gun," he tells me. "I thought that was good enough. I said, 'Go back to your neighborhood so people will know Algiers Point is not a place you go for a vacation. We're not doing tours right now.'"

He's equally blunt in *Welcome to New Orleans*, an hourlong documentary produced by the Danish video team, who captured Janak, beer in hand, gloating about hunting humans. Surrounded by a crowd of sunburned white Algiers Point locals at a barbeque held not long after the hurricane, he smiles and tells the camera, "It was great! It was like pheasant season in South Dakota. If it moved, you shot it." A native of Chicago, Janak also boasts of becoming a true Southerner, saying, "I am no longer a Yankee. I earned my wings." A white woman standing next to him adds, "He understands the N-word now." In this neighborhood, she continues, "we take care of our own."

Janak, who says he'd been armed with two .38s and a shotgun, brags about keeping the bloody shirt worn by a shooting victim as a trophy. When "looters" showed up in the neighborhood, "they left full of buckshot," he brags, adding, "You know what? Algiers Point is not a pussy community."

Within that community the gunmen enjoyed wide support. In an outtake from the documentary, a group of white Algiers Point residents gathers to celebrate the arrival of military troops sent to police the area. Addressing the crowd, one local praises the vigilantes for holding the neighborhood together until the Army Humvees trundled into town, noting that some of the militia figures are present at the party. "You all know who you are," the man says. "And I'm proud of every one of you all." Cheering and applause erupts from the assembled locals.

Some of the gunmen prowling Algiers Point were out to wage a race war, says one woman whose uncle and two cousins joined the cause. A former New Orleanian, this source spoke to me anonymously because she fears her relatives could be prosecuted for their crimes. "My uncle was very excited that it was a free-for-all—white against black—that he could participate in," says the woman. "For him, the opportunity to hunt black people was a joy."

A relative of the gunmen says, 'My uncle was very excited that it was a free-for-all.... For him, the opportunity to hunt black people was a joy.'

"They didn't want any of the 'ghetto niggers' coming over" from the east side of the river, she says, adding that her relatives viewed African-Americans who wandered into Algiers Point as "fair game." One of her cousins, a young man in his 20s, sent an e-mail to her and several other family members describing his adventures with the militia. He had attached a photo in which he posed next to an African-American man who'd been fatally shot. The tone of the e-mail, she says, was "gleeful"—her cousin was happy that "they were shooting niggers."

An Algiers Point homeowner who wasn't involved in the shootings describes another attack. "All I can tell you is what I saw," says the white resident, who asked to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals. He witnessed a barrage of gunfire—from a shotgun, an AK-47 and a handgun—directed by militiamen at two African-American men standing on Pelican Street, not too far from Janak's place. The gunfire hit one of them. "I saw blood squirting out of his back," he says. "I'm an EMT. My instinct should've been to rush to him. But I didn't. And if I had, those guys"—the militiamen—"might have opened up on me, too."

The witness shows me a home video he recorded shortly after the storm. On the tape, three white Algiers Point men discuss the incident. One says it might be a bad idea to talk candidly about the crime. Another dismisses the notion, claiming, "No jury would convict."

According to Pervel, one of the shootings occurred just a few feet from his house. "Three young black men were walking down this street and they started moving the barricade," he tells me. The men, he says, wanted to continue walking along the street, but Pervel's neighbor, who was armed, commanded them to keep the barricade in place and leave. A standoff ensued until the neighbor shot one of the men, who then, according to Pervel, "ran a block and died" at the intersection of Alix and Vallette Streets.

Even Pervel is surprised the shootings have generated so little scrutiny. "Aside from you, no one's come around asking

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questions about this," he says. "I'm surprised. If that was my son, I'd want to know who shot him."

By Pervel's count, four people died violently in Algiers Point in the aftermath of the storm, including a bloody corpse left on Opelousas Avenue. That nameless body came up again and again in interviews, a grisly recurring motif. Who was he? How did he die? Nobody knew—or nobody would tell me.

After hearing all these gruesome stories, I wonder if any of the militia figures I've interviewed were involved in the shooting of Herrington and company. In particular, Pervel's and Janak's anecdotes intrigue me, since both men discussed shooting incidents that sounded a lot like the crime that nearly killed Herrington and wounded Alexander and Collins. Both Pervel and Janak recounted incidents in which vigilantes confronted three black men.

Hoping to solve the mystery, I show Herrington and Alexander video of Pervel, Janak and Roper, all of whom are in their 50s or 60s. No match. The shooters, Herrington and Alexander tell me, were younger men, in their 30s or 40s, sporting prominent tattoos. I have not been able to track them down.

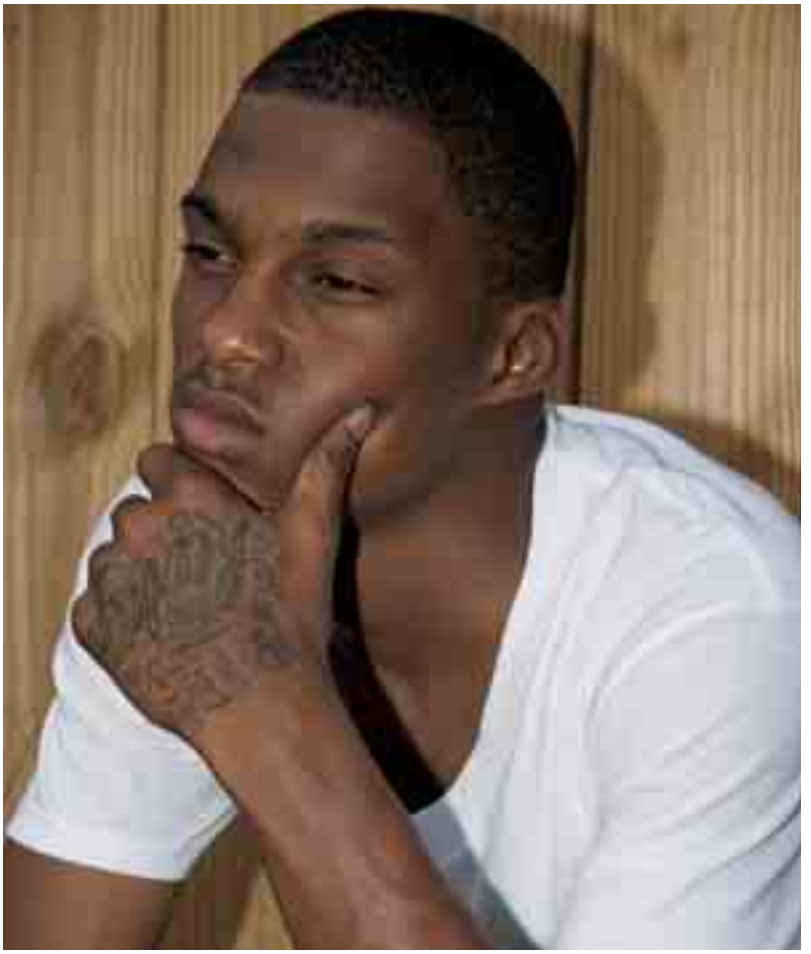
New Orleans, of course, is awash in tales of the horrible things that transpired in the wake of the hurricane—and many of these wild stories have turned out to be fictions. In researching the Algiers Point attacks, I relied on the accounts of people who witnessed shooting incidents or were directly involved, either as gunmen or shooting victims.

Seeking to corroborate their stories, I sought out documentary evidence, including police files and autopsy reports. The NOPD, I was told, kept very few records during that period. Orleans Parish coroner Frank Minyard was a different story. The coroner, a flamboyant trumpet-playing doctor who has held the office for more than thirty years, had file cabinets bulging with the autopsies of hundreds of Katrina victims—he just wouldn't let me see them, in defiance of Louisiana public records laws.

After wrangling with the coroner for more than six months, I decided to sue—with a lawyer hired by the Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute—to get access to the autopsies. (We weren't the first to take the coroner to court. CNN and the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* had successfully sued Minyard, seeking particular Katrina-related autopsies.) This past May, Orleans Parish district court judge Kern Reese ruled in our favor, ordering Minyard to allow me to review every autopsy done in the year after the storm. But I soon learned that reconstructing history from the coroner's mess of files was next to impossible, because the paper trail is incomplete. "We carried the records around in our cars, in the trunks of our cars, for four months and, I mean, that—that was the coroner's office," Minyard said in a sworn deposition obtained during the course of our suit. "I'm sure some of the records got lost or misplaced." Even the autopsy files we got were missing key facts, like where the bodies were found, who recovered them, when they were recovered and so forth.

Many of the manila file folders the coroner eventually turned over were empty, and Minyard said he'd simply chosen not to autopsy some twenty-five to fifty corpses. The coroner also told us he didn't know exactly how many people were shot to death in the days immediately after the storm—"I can't even tell you how many gunshot victims we had"—but figured the number would not "be more than ten."

Under oath Minyard proceeded to say something stunning. The NOPD, he testified, was only investigating three gunshot cases, all of them high-profile—the Danziger Bridge incident, in which police killed two civilians, and the shooting of Danny Brumfield, who was slain by a cop in front of the Convention Center. Minyard's statement buttressed information I'd gotten from NOPD sources who said the force has done little to prosecute people for assaults or murders committed in the wake of the storm.



A white gunman jammed a pistol in Marcel Alexander's face and shouted, "We got you niggers!"

I contacted the police department repeatedly over many months, providing the NOPD with specific questions about each incident discussed in this story. The department, through spokesman Robert Young, declined to comment on whether officers had investigated any of these crimes and would not discuss any other issues raised by this article.

Sifting through more than 800 autopsy reports and reams of state health department data, I quickly identified five New Orleanians who had died under suspicious circumstances: one, severely burned, was found in a charred abandoned auto (see

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"Body of Evidence," page 19); three were shot; and another died of "blunt force trauma to the head." However, it's impossible to tell from the shoddy records whether any of these people died in or around Algiers Point, or even if their bodies were found there.

No one has been arrested in connection with these suspicious deaths. When it comes to the lack of action on the cases, one well-placed NOPD source told me there was plenty of blame to go around. "We had a totally dysfunctional DA's office," he said. "The court system wasn't much better. Everything was in disarray. A lot of stuff didn't get prosecuted. There were a lot of things that were getting squashed. The UCR [uniform crime reports] don't show anything."

In response to detailed queries made over a period of months, New Orleans District Attorney spokesman Dalton Savwoir declined to say whether prosecutors looked into any of the attacks I uncovered. The office has been through a string of leadership changes since Katrina—Leon Cannizaro is the current DA—and is struggling to deal with crimes that happened yesterday, let alone three years ago, Savwoir told me.

'There should be a multiagency task force—police, sheriffs, coroners—that can figure out what happened to people,' says a pathologist.

James Traylor, a forensic pathologist with the Louisiana State University Health Center, worked alongside Minyard at the morgue and suspects that homicide victims fell through the cracks. "I know I did cases that were homicides," Traylor says. "They were not suicides." NOPD detectives, the doctor continues, never spoke to him about two cases he labeled homicides, leading him to believe police conducted no investigation into those deaths. "There should be a multi-agency task force—police, sheriffs, coroners—that can put their heads together and figure out what happened to people," Traylor says.

One of the suspicious cases I discovered was that of Willie Lawrence, a 47-year-old African-American male who suffered a "gunshot wound" that caused a "cranio-facial injury" and deposited two chunks of metal in his brain, according to the autopsy report. Minyard never determined whether Lawrence was murdered or committed suicide, choosing to leave the death unclassified. However, the dead man's brother, Herbert Lawrence, who lives in Compton, California, believes his sibling was murdered. Herbert tells me he got a phone call from one of Willie's neighbors shortly after he died. The caller said Willie, whose body, according to state records, was found on the east bank of the Mississippi, was killed by a civilian gunman. "The police didn't do anything," Herbert says, pointing out that NOPD officers didn't create a written report or interview any relatives.

Malik Rahim is one of a handful of African-Americans who live in Algiers Point, and as far as he's concerned, "We are tolerated. We are not accepted." In the days after the storm struck, Rahim says, the vigilantes "would pass by and call us all kind of names, say how they were gonna burn down my house." They thought "all blacks was looting."

As he walked the near-deserted streets in that period, Rahim, 61, a former Black Panther with a mane of dreadlocks, came across several dead bodies of African-American men. Inspecting the bodies, he discovered what he took to be evidence of gunfire. "One guy had about his entire head shot off," says Rahim, who was spurred by the storm to launch Common Ground Relief, a grassroots aid organization. "It's pretty hard to think a person drowned when half their head's been blown off," he says. He thinks some of the gunmen saw Katrina as a "golden opportunity to rid the community of African-Americans."

Sitting at his kitchen table, while a noisy AC unit does its best to neutralize the stifling Louisiana heat, Rahim describes the dead and lists the locations where he found the bodies. He also shows me video footage taken days after the storm. On the tape, Rahim points to the grossly distended corpse of an African-American man lying on the ground.

Rahim introduces me to his neighbor, Reggie Bell, 39, the African-American man Pervel confronted at gunpoint as he walked by Pervel's house. At the time, Bell, a cook, lived just a few blocks down the street from Pervel. In Bell's recollection, Pervel, standing with another gun-toting man, demanded to know what Bell was doing in Algiers Point. "I live here," Bell replied. "I can show you mail."

That answer didn't appease the gunmen, he says. According to Bell, Pervel told him, "Well, we don't want you around here. You loot, we shoot."

Roughly twenty-four hours later, as Bell sat on his front porch grilling food, another batch of armed white men accosted him, intending to drive him from his home at gunpoint, he says. "Whatcha still doing around here?" they asked, according to Bell. "We don't want you around here. You gotta go."

Bell tells me he was gripped by fear, panicked that he was about to experience ethnic cleansing, Louisiana-style. The armed men eventually left, but Bell remained nervous over the coming days. "I believe it was skin color," he says, that prompted the militia to try to force him out. "That was some really wrong stuff." Bell's then-girlfriend, who was present during the second incident, confirms his story. (In a later interview, Pervel admits he confronted Bell with a shotgun but portrays the incident as a minor misunderstanding, saying he's since apologized to Bell.)

On my final visit to Algiers Point, I stand on Patterson Street, my notebook out, interviewing a pair of residents in the dimming evening light. An older white man, on his way home from a bar, strides up and asks what I'm doing. I reply with a vague explanation, saying I'm working on an article about the "untold stories of Hurricane Katrina."

Without a pause, he says, "Oh. You mean the shootings. Yeah, there were a bunch of shootings."

When I share with Donnell Herrington what the militia men and Algiers Point locals have told me over the course of my investigation, he grows silent. His eyes focus on a point far away. After a moment, he says quietly, "That's pretty disturbing to hear that—I'm not going to lie to you—to hear that these guys are cocky. They feel like they got away with it." ■

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Body of Evidence

Did New Orleans police play a role in the grisly death of Henry Glover?

by A.C. THOMPSON

In September 2005, roughly a week after Hurricane Katrina ripped into the Gulf Coast, a group of New Orleans police officers discovered the burned shell of a car sitting on an earthen levee overlooking the bloated Mississippi River. Inside the scorched sedan, scattered across the back seat, lay black ashes and bones. Human bones. A charred skull, shards of rib, an arm bone, clumps of roasted flesh. Equipped with a digital camera, one cop clicked off a string of photos of the tableau.

Eventually, the remains were stuffed into five red plastic bags and hauled to a temporary morgue in the tiny town of St. Gabriel, some seventy miles up the road from New Orleans, autopsy records show. At the St. Gabriel facility, a team of rescue workers and forensic pathologists gave the collection of body fragments a number—06-00189—and began trying to answer a pair of intertwined questions: who was this man, and how did he die?

Dr. Kevin Whaley, a forensic pathologist, had an immediate suspicion about the latter. "My first reaction was that it was a homicide," recalls Whaley, a Virginia state medical examiner who went to Louisiana as part of a federal disaster response team. "When I heard he was found in a burned car I thought that was a classic homicide scenario: you kill someone and burn the body to get rid of the evidence."

Whaley studied a full-body X-ray of the remains. "There wasn't very much left of him," Whaley says. "Pretty much most of him had gone to ash." He figures victim 06-00189 must have been burned at an extremely hot temperature, somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000 degrees. Mixed in with the bones and cinders, the scan revealed, was a constellation of metal bits; the autopsy report notes "rib fractures with minute fragments of metal within the surrounding soft tissues." From the X-rays, Whaley couldn't tell if the metal chunks were the remnants of a bullet or a knife blade—either way, they looked to him like evidence of a possible murder.

In Whaley's view, the case should have been treated as a possible homicide. But Orleans Parish coroner Frank Minyard ruled the death "unclassified" after what appears to have been a cursory inquiry. And in the end no law enforcement agency ever probed the matter, and no media outlet ever reported on the enigmatic case of the burned man, who was eventually identified, via DNA analysis, as Henry Glover, 31.

If the NOPD ever bothers to learn who set fire to Glover, the department's first step should be questioning its own personnel: a trail of clues leads right back to the police force.

I've been able to reconstruct the final hours of Henry Glover's life from interviews with two eyewitnesses. On September 2, 2005, Glover was walking with his friend Bernard Calloway behind a shuttered Chuck E. Cheese pizza place in a run-down strip mall in the Algiers section of New Orleans. Suddenly, there was a shout—"Get out of here!"—followed by the crack of a single gunshot. The bullet pierced Glover's chest.

As Glover bled, Calloway ran and got Glover's brother, Edward King, who was at an apartment complex nearby. King tells me neither he nor Calloway saw the shooter, and he doesn't know why the crime went down. But King knows what happened next: he and Calloway began desperately searching for someone with a car who could drive Glover to a hospital.

When William Tanner came rolling down Seine Street in his white 2002 Chevrolet Malibu, King rushed into the road and pleaded with him to stop. A middle-aged junkyard helper and lawn mower repairman, Tanner didn't know King or the others, but he could see Glover needed immediate medical attention. "We picked [Glover] up and put him in the car," Tanner recalls. "He was still breathing. We thought he might have a fair chance of surviving."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHANDRA McCORMICK AND KEITH CALHOUN

Edna Glover holds a portrait of her son, whose remains were found behind a police station.

Tanner says he made a snap decision that the nearest hospital—the West Jefferson Medical Center—was too far away and chose instead to drive Glover to Paul B. Habans Elementary School, a public school that had been commandeered by the New Orleans Police Department tactical unit, or SWAT team, for use as a temporary base. The police, Tanner thought, would know how to help the wounded man; at the very least, they'd be able to get him an ambulance. But when Tanner pulled his car into the school's semicircular driveway, things turned out very differently: rather than rushing to aid Glover, the officers treated everyone in the vehicle with hostility, according to Tanner and King.

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"They put guns in our faces," says Tanner. He suspects the police "assumed [Glover] was looting and that's why he got shot. They assumed we were looters, too."

King tells me he frantically tried to get the officers to help Glover: "I was hollering, saying, 'My brother's shot!' They handcuffed us. I said, 'You're not worrying about my brother.' They said some bad words to us and started beating us. They were beating us for twenty minutes." Tanner and King say that they, along with Calloway, were seated on a bench and cuffed while a swarm of officers punched, slapped and berated them. One of the officers bludgeoned Tanner in the face with the butt of an assault rifle, they say. "Every time I'd look up or sit up, they'd beat me," King tells me, noting that about five officers, all of them white, participated in the beating.

William Tanner with the rusted hulk of his Chevy Malibu, which was incinerated along with Henry Glover's body

Meanwhile, in the back seat of the car, Glover, a father of four, was sliding toward death as blood poured from his wound, according to King and Tanner. Both men insist the officers did nothing to try to save Glover, despite his obvious injury, and both firmly believe that Glover died that day in Tanner's Chevy.

When the officers finally decided to free the men, they held on to Tanner's car, Tanner and King say. Tanner recalls one officer saying, "The car is in police custody. It's under investigation," and yanking his jumper cables, Stanley toolbox and gas can out of the Chevy, while a second officer got into the car and drove away with Glover's body slumped in the back. Poking out of a pocket on the driver's dark cargo pants were two emergency flares, Tanner remembers.

Immediately after the incident, Tanner phoned his wife, who'd evacuated to Houston. "When William contacted me he told me they'd beaten him," Catrina Tanner, a state worker with the Louisiana Department of Social Services, recalls. "He was upset. He kept telling me that I wouldn't believe what was going on, that police were killing people." She continues, "He said the police drove off [in his car] towards the levee."

Carrying a laptop computer, a law enforcement source meets me in a quiet cafe. After ordering a cup of coffee, the source sits down at my table and slips a CD of photos into the computer. A grisly color image appears on the screen: spread across the seat of a burned auto is that human skull surrounded by ashes. These are Glover's remains, as they were found and photographed by cops from the Fourth District, which serves Algiers, this person tells me. The source, who asked to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation, says the car is Tanner's Chevy, which was discovered on a levee a few hundred yards from the Fourth District station.

NOPD brass chose not to investigate the death at the time, the source says, adding that some police believed Glover was a looter, and that his body was burned up by officers who didn't want to smell the corpse as it decayed in the brutal Louisiana heat. "Have you ever smelled a dead body?" the source asks. "They smell horrible."

Scrolling through the photos, the source studies the damage to the car and notes that it takes an accelerant or an incendiary device to cause such extensive scorching.

In response to my repeated queries about the death of Henry Glover—including two sets of detailed written questions—NOPD spokesman Robert Young offers two sentences via e-mail: "The death of Mr. Glover was investigated by the Orleans Parish Coroner's Office independent of the New Orleans Police Department, who found no evidence to rule the death of Mr. Glover a homicide. Furthermore, the New Orleans Police Department did not receive any information to support or substantiate the information that you received from your sources."

The allegations about Glover's death don't startle Mary Howell, a New Orleans civil rights attorney who's been litigating against the NOPD for more than thirty years. During the 1980s, Howell sued the force over the torture and killing of African-Americans by west bank police, crimes that led to the jailing of three officers, a multimillion-dollar settlement and a significant shake-up in the department. Officers, explains Howell, "would tie people down and put a bag over their heads until they started to suffocate. It was the New Orleans equivalent of waterboarding."

In Howell's view the department remains seriously dysfunctional. "The things that happened with the police department during Katrina were shocking," she says. "They were disturbing. I wish I could say they were aberrant. But they were not. They are what happens when you have a department that is deeply troubled."

After Glover's death, Tanner left town. Since he no longer had a car, his mother-in-law drove from Texas to pick him up. At the time Tanner was keeping a video diary, and in a scene shot in a motel room outside New Orleans he wonders aloud about the fate of his Chevy. Only after Tanner and his wife returned home on September 29, 2005, did they learn that

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someone had incinerated the vehicle, along with Glover.

Tanner and his wife say Homeland Security agents, who were assisting NOPD during that time, alerted them to the location of their charred vehicle. Despite the state of the car, the couple was able to identify it by the license plate and the vehicle identification number.

Still disturbed by the incident, Tanner met with Althea Francois, an organizer with Safe Streets/Strong Communities, a local police accountability group, in the spring of 2006. After interviewing Tanner, Francois typed up a detailed two-page description of the episode, an account that mirrors what Tanner and King told me later in interviews.

Francois, who regularly documents incidents of police misconduct, found Tanner's story convincing. "I was appalled," she tells me. "As unbelievable as it sounds, I believe it. He had no reason to lie about any of this." Safe Streets, Francois says, "just didn't have the resources" to find Tanner a lawyer to file suit over the episode.

When I show up to meet with Glover's mother, Edna Glover, at her west bank townhouse, I get a surprise. Hoping to glean some new information about Glover's death, his sister, brother, nieces, nephews and cousins have all crowded into the living room to talk with me. A framed photo of Glover decked out in a white tuxedo hangs on the wall.

NOPD, Edna says, never contacted the family about her son's death. "We didn't hear nothing," she mutters. To her knowledge, police didn't interview anyone else about the crime, either. Glover's sister, Patrice Glover, is teary as she tells me, "We want justice done. That was my brother, and we all loved him dearly. We wanna know who did it. We're all still hurting." Patrice says her family, like Tanner, has been unable to find a lawyer willing to bring suit against the NOPD.

After leaving Edna Glover's home, Tanner takes me to see the skeleton of his car, which, more than three years after the hurricane, is still sitting by the river, rusting away in the swampy air. Here, in this broken city, certain things have a way of being forgotten. ■

The Prophet

Howard Dean's 50-state strategy transformed the Democratic Party. What comes next?

by ARI BERMAN

It's a week after the election and Howard Dean is speaking at the 92nd Street Y in New York City, giving an unusually full-throated argument for Democratic Party organizing in Oklahoma, the only state where John McCain beat Barack Obama in every single county. "I don't know when we're going to win Oklahoma, but we have a Democratic governor from Oklahoma, we have a Democratic Congressman from Oklahoma and what we need to do is go to Oklahoma, show up and explain ourselves in terms of the values that Oklahomans hold." Those values, Dean argued, aren't so different from those of New York City or anywhere else commonly thought of as Democratic territory. It just so happens that Oklahoma's aforementioned governor, Brad Henry, had given Dean a pair of cowboy boots, which he wore, to somewhat hilarious effect, throughout the Democratic convention in Denver.

The former Vermont governor and chair of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) has become an unlikely advocate for Democrats across the country, particularly in so-called red America. His passion for showing up in unexpected locales is not based on wishful thinking or stubborn naïveté but rather political necessity. Dean's favorite quote, which he repeats over and over, is Louis Pasteur's "Chance favors the prepared mind." The way he sees it, you never know when any state, even the Sooner State, might get a jolt of blue. After all, just look at what happened in 2006, when Democrats flipped both houses of Congress. Or this past November, when Barack Obama won Indiana, North Carolina and Virginia, along with three previously red Western states, and the party picked up Congressional seats in places like Alabama, Alaska, Idaho and Mississippi.

PETER O. ZIERLEIN*

It almost feels like ancient history, but "four years ago the Democratic Party was in a very different condition," Doctor Dean says at the beginning of his talk at the Y. Republicans had just retained the White House, gained four seats in the Senate and three in the House, and held twenty-eight governorships. Bill Frist was Senate majority leader, Dennis Hastert was House Speaker, George Bush's approval rating was at a healthy 50 percent and Karl Rove planned a "permanent Republican majority." It was "not a fun time to be a Democrat," Dean cracks.

How quickly things change. Four years later Democrats elected Obama with 67 million votes. They picked up seven seats in the Senate (with Minnesota still pending at press time)

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and twenty-one in the House, and they hold sixty of ninety-nine state legislative chambers. Obama's extraordinary campaign and Bush's remarkable mishandling of the country's domestic and foreign policies deserve much of the credit for the Democratic Party's resurgence, but so does Howard Dean. Before virtually any major politician, Dean not only sensed that the era of Republican ascendancy could be stopped but also how to do it, first through his trailblazing though unsuccessful presidential campaign of 2004, and then through his forceful stewardship of the party as DNC chair since 2005. "Dean gave the party a mission and a focus," says Paul Tewes, a top Obama strategist who ran day-to-day operations at the DNC during the general election. "That's a big deal when you're out of power." DNC member Donna Brazile calls Dean "one of the unsung heroes of this moment."

As he prepares to step down as DNC chair in January, giving way to Obama's handpicked successor, Dean has cemented his legacy as a prophetic, if underappreciated, visionary in the party [see Berman, "The Dean Legacy," March 17]. When pundits saw the country hopelessly divided between red and blue—with the blue part of the map restricted to the West Coast, the Northeast and an increasingly embattled Midwest—Dean argued that the party had to compete everywhere. After the epic meltdown of his presidential campaign, punctuated by the endlessly looped "Dean scream" after the Iowa caucus, Dean took one of the most thankless jobs in Washington and turned it into a laboratory for one of the most exciting experiments in modern Democratic Party history. He radically devolved power away from Washington by cultivating a new generation of state political organizers and lending support (and money) to long-forgotten local parties, bucking the Beltway establishment and enabling grassroots activists. He rehabilitated his party, and his image, in the process. Dean's fifty-state strategy, as it came to be known, "fertilized the landscape" for Obama's fifty-state campaign, Brazile says. If his strategy is extended during the Obama administration, we'll find out what a true fifty-state party looks like.

Democratic Party veterans are urging the sometimes insular Obama team not to take the broader party for granted.

At the 2004 Democratic convention, Dean, who was running Democracy for America, the grassroots organization he founded after his presidential bid, met with state chairs from around the country and heard all about their woes. "They were all talking to me about how hard it was to win governorships and Congressional seats and state legislative races because nobody would put any money in except in the presidential race," Dean recalls in an early December interview in his Washington office. He'd learned during the primary that year how much the party had atrophied organizationally, "lurching from one election to the next," slicing the electorate into narrower and narrower targets (remember Florida and Ohio?). The meeting with the state chairs confirmed his worst fears. "I realized we weren't a national party anymore," he says.

A few months later the state chairs asked Dean and the other contenders for DNC chair to give $200,000 a year to each state party. Dean enthusiastically embraced and enlarged the plan en route to easily winning the DNC race and gave every state the resources to hire at least three or four organizers and access to a high-tech database of voters, which became the twin cornerstones of the fifty-state strategy. Under Dean, battlegrounds like Ohio still took priority, but every state got something. That might not sound like much, but it was practically a revolution within the Democratic Party, which tended to view the DNC as a PR agency and ATM for Congress and/or the White House. "We had a great building and no debt," Dean says, referring to the work of his predecessor, the high-flying Clintonite Terry McAuliffe. "But there was essentially no technological infrastructure and no political infrastructure of any worth." The states, by and large, had been left to fend for themselves.

Indiana is a good example. When Dan Parker became chair of the state party in November 2004, his first order was to slash his staff in half after Democrats lost the governor's mansion. Indiana, like so many states, had been written off by the national party—the last Democratic presidential contender to carry it was Lyndon Johnson. But Dean gave Parker the money to hire three field organizers and a full-time communications director, the first the state had ever had. (When Dean came in, thirty states had no such important position.) In 2006 that staff worked on three competitive Congressional races long before the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) arrived. The party picked up all three seats that year and elected a record number of Democratic mayors in 2007. By the time the Democratic primary rolled around this past May, Hoosier Dems had been revitalized, and Obama—to the surprise of many—invested heavily in the state, visiting forty-nine times. On November 4 Obama won Indiana—a state John Kerry lost by twenty points—by 26,000 votes. "We're a poster child for the fifty-state strategy," Parker says.

If Indiana was ignored by the national party, then a place like Alaska—5,000 miles from Washington—didn't exist. Dean was roundly mocked, including in a *New York Times Magazine* profile, for visiting and investing in the Last Frontier. "The idea that you're going to put money in a place like Alaska seemed insane," Dean says, "because you could take the same amount of money and maybe win a House seat in California with it. That was the thinking here. The problem is, that's a totally short-term strategy." The DNC's investment increased the size of the Alaska party staff from one to four. More important, "it made Alaskans proud to be Democrats again," says state chair Patti Higgins. When opportunity struck, as Dean predicted, Democrats were ready. "It doesn't look so dumb now that Ted Stevens got indicted [in July] and today we have a Democratic senator from Alaska," Dean says. "But without a voter list and a party that knows what it's doing and is well trained and staffers that are up there for four years, we don't win that seat, plain and simple." Not only did former Anchorage mayor Mark Begich knock off Stevens; Democrats ran their strongest challenge yet to Alaska's lone Congressman, Don Young, who's held the seat for thirty-five years, and polls showed Obama leading in the state before John McCain tapped Sarah Palin as his running

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mate. Now the party is focused on ousting Palin from the governor's mansion in 2010. When I spoke to Higgins, she was heading to a press conference to denounce Palin, who was campaigning in Georgia that day, as "AWOL from Alaska."

Transferring power away from Washington, not surprisingly, didn't sit well with many Beltway power brokers, who wanted DNC money spent on TV ads in targeted races. Dean's clashes with DCCC head Rahm Emanuel are now the stuff of legend. "I know how hard it was and the kind of criticism he took, when all they wanted the DNC to do was raise money and send it downstairs to the DCCC and across the street to the Democratic Governors Association and down the block to the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee," recalls Donna Brazile. "And Dean said no: we're going to play, we're going to have a role, we're going to be a part of this."

Dean's doggedness became a virtue. The 2006 takeover of Congress, when Dems captured seats in many under-the-radar conservative districts, silenced the doubters, including Emanuel. When James Carville suggested after the election that Dean be replaced by right-leaning Democratic Leadership Council chair Harold Ford Jr., Dean called his remaining critics remnants of the "old Democratic Party." He was right. "Dean won the argument, there's no doubt about it," says Elaine Kamarck, an influential DNC member and professor at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. "Rahm was the beneficiary of Dean's strategy," Brazile says. "He would never admit it, but the fact that we put organizers in Indiana, put organizers in Mississippi, put organizers out West, that helped him build the supermajority we have today on Capitol Hill." (Asked by talk-show host D.L. Hughley if he felt "vindicated," Dean joked, "I might have been right, but I'd rather be chief of staff.")

Almost nobody is questioning the fifty-state strategy anymore. Dean's popularity among party activists has never been greater. At a December DNC meeting in San Diego, party leaders from New Hampshire to Kansas to Nevada spoke about how their states had been transformed, with Dean's help, in under four years. The state chairs passed a resolution praising Dean for taking "on all foes to defend the inherent brilliance" of the fifty-state strategy, and calling him "the most successful Democratic chairman in decades." (He's certainly the least pretentious: Dean took the same JetBlue red-eye back to New York as I did. "I only take red-eyes," he told me as we boarded.)

If '06 hinted at the strategy's potential, then '08 proved its wisdom and importance. "All the things they did to prepare the party for 2008 as part of the fifty-state strategy made the transition to the general election much easier for us," says Obama strategist Tewes. Across the country, during a prolonged Democratic primary, the party registered, recruited and turned out a record number of Democrats, independents and even Republicans. On May 10, after virtually clinching the nomination, Obama launched a huge, fifty-state voter registration drive. The numbers were astonishing: in North Carolina alone, the party registered 800,000 new voters between January and election day. The total number of new voters registered in the nine formerly red states that Obama carried eclipsed the margin of victory in each of those states. With his state-of-the-art organization, seemingly limitless resources and message of change and inclusion, Obama became the first candidate in a long time to run a

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genuinely national campaign, with offices and engaged volunteers in every state until the very end.

Obama's success at building a national organization across the map, from the bottom up, surprised even Dean. "I thought we needed a long-term business plan, and we needed to stick to it," Dean says. "Little did I know we were going to have this incredibly charismatic candidate who would do it all in four years. I have to say it happened a lot faster than I thought it would." Now even Republicans, having seen their strongholds reduced to the Deep South, want to emulate Dean, with candidates for RNC chair proposing their own version of the fifty-state strategy.

After a historic election night, on November 5, the fifty-state strategy's nearly 200 local organizers woke up to the news that their contracts were expiring on November 30. The e-mail from headquarters called it a "bittersweet moment." Until further notice, the program had taken a leave of absence. Once again, the party's grassroots activists were on their own, awaiting marching orders.

Dean and his allies are hopeful that the strategy is simply on brief sabbatical, while the Obama administration conducts a postelection review and decides whom to install as new leader (surprisingly few names have been floated for the job). "I think they'll do it their way, but I think they'll continue it because it worked for them," Dean says. "This is the candidate who expanded the playing field in a way we haven't seen for a long, long time." In 2007, at the beginning of the Democratic primary, the state chairs persuaded all the potential nominees to commit to funding the fifty-state strategy should they become president. Now they're looking for Obama to keep his pledge. "We've made it very clear that we think the program was a great success, and we'd like to see it continue," says Mark Brewer, head of the Michigan Democratic Party and head of the state chairs.

Discussions are ongoing among Obama's top strategists about how to institutionalize their network of supporters and how to use the DNC. "I absolutely think the DNC should have a fifty-state strategy," says Obama deputy campaign manager Steve Hildebrand. "I think there needs to be an evaluation of exactly what that means. It's an expensive endeavor. And the way it was done this time doesn't mean that's the way it has to be done every time." Dean clearly wants the party to become the new center of Obama's movement. "I would like the DNC to not only be what it is today but to be the grassroots arm for support of Obama's policies," he says.

Obama's advisers are debating whether to create a separate organization to house the valuable assets from the campaign—particularly the coveted 13 million-name e-mail list, which is likely to grow—or to fold the Obama network into a quasi-independent entity within the DNC (think of a vast, Obama-centric MoveOn.org, tentatively known as Obama for America 2.0). "Going forward, they are committed to having a robust operation at the party," says a former DNC official close to the Obama campaign. "Most of Obama's grassroots infrastructure is going to go to the DNC. That's the prevailing gossip of the past few weeks, and it's been pretty consistent." Others aren't so sure; a few DNC members in San Diego privately worried that Obama would make the DNC and state parties mere figureheads, subsumed by the Obama wing of the party.

Party veterans like Kamarck are urging the sometimes insular Obama team not to take the broader party for granted. "People always want to keep their own organizations, but the problem is then they go away with the candidate," Kamarck says. "If you want to build a lasting legacy, you have to do it through the party. In the years of Republican dominance, which we now hope is over, one of the things that was striking was how institutionalized the RNC was. They had stable teams, personnel; it wasn't a revolving cast of characters. It was really the place they built a base of strength from."

The DNC could become the place where, as Simon Rosenberg of the New Democratic Network puts it, "Obama can reinvent the party apparatus around the model he just used to win the presidency." With redistricting on the horizon in 2010, as state legislatures determine the makeup of Congress for years to come, "the Obama team has a massive incentive in this coming election cycle to run a national fifty-state, bottom-up, grassroots campaign," Rosenberg says.

Dean, for his part, wants to move from electoral politics back to his original passion, public policy. "Whether it's inside the administration or out, that's up to the Obama folks," he admits. "With a little of God's grace I have ten or fifteen more years of working activism in me, and I'll use it to continue a progressive agenda." ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

that I "backed off" from a full dismissal of Wood's work out of fealty to the New York critics, when it should be clear that I found much in Wood to praise, and that when I compared him to the older critics it was to underscore his limitations. Why would fealty lead me to be lenient toward him? Holm also apparently doesn't realize that since coming to this country, Wood has based himself in Washington and Boston but never, as far as I know, in New York. He might also be interested to learn that I don't live there, either. His hostility to New York writers seems based at least in part in a kind of reverse snobbery; but in any case, I can only feel pity for a reader who finds nothing of interest in Trilling, Kazin, Hardwick or Howe.

Peter Byrne seems to think that only Americans can write engagedly about the United States. He also assumes that the sociopolitical investment I find lacking in Wood refers exclusively to an interest in the American scene. In fact, though I don't accept the first assumption, I took pains to compare Wood's writing on English novelists with that of the New York critics on American ones. Notwithstanding Wood's recent essay on Naipaul, which is highly atypical, his criticism generally exhibits no interest whatsoever in political, cultural or intellectual history—of the United States, Great Britain or anywhere else—as I am by no means the first to point out.

William Deresiewicz

I Vant to Be Alone

Blooming Grove, N.Y.

Re the three poems by Keith Waldrop in the December 8 issue: Keith Waldrop's poems remind me of something. Now what was it? Ah, yes. Where poetry goes to be alone.

Joel Solonche

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Books & the Arts.

SERPENT'S TAIL

Derek Raymond, 1989

Death at One's Elbow

by CHARLES TAYLOR

"Murder, which is a frustration…of the race, may have, and in fact has, a good deal of sociological implication. But it has been going on too long for it to be news." When Raymond Chandler wrote those lines in his essay "The Simple Art of Murder," he was talking about detective stories in which murder, however persistent, is seen as a violation of the social order. In the "Factory" series, the sequence of crime novels written from 1984 to 1990 by the late English crime writer Derek Raymond, murder has become a perfect expression of the prevailing political order—in this case, Margaret Thatcher's Britain. Thatcher famously claimed that there is no such thing as society. In the Factory novels, the social order can't be violated because it has already been dismantled.

Charles Taylor is a writer living in Brooklyn, New York.

Thatcher is never named in the Factory books, but her shadow falls over them. With their dogged, lyrical, sometimes sentimental, sometimes appallingly violent manner, they offer a consistent portrait of a world in which people are not respected for their humanity but valued according to their usefulness to those in power. To those foolish enough to still think of Thatcher as a female version of Ronald Reagan—in other words, those who don't understand how her undisguised social Darwinism was far more ruthless than Reagan's blithe free-market cheerleading—the novels might be a shock. The books are certainly as bracing as much of the anti-Thatcher art of the era—novels like Ian McEwan's *The Child in Time* and Jonathan Coe's *The Winshaw Legacy*; the music of the Mekons and the more pointed Elvis Costello songs like "Pills and Soap" and "Tramp the Dirt Down"; and especially the astonishing vitality of English cinema of the times, in movies such as *My Beautiful Laundrette*, *Mona Lisa* and *High Hopes*, and in forgotten films like *Defense of the Realm*, *Letter to Brezhnev*, *No Surrender* and *Rita, Sue and Bob Too*.

He Died With His Eyes Open
Serpent's Tail. 211 pp. $14.95.

The Devil's Home on Leave
Serpent's Tail. 218 pp. $14.95.

How the Dead Live
Serpent's Tail. 213 pp. $14.95.

I Was Dora Suarez
Serpent's Tail. 202 pp. $14.95.

All by Derek Raymond.

The brutality of some hard-boiled detective heroes, their contempt for procedure and regulations, seems to belong to a right-wing law-and-order ethos. But apart from the fallacy of equating order with con-

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servatism, the politics of the genre are not so easily pinned down. (Besides, from Thatcher trashing the National Health Service to Bush abandoning New Orleans and demolishing the world economy, the restoration of order is increasingly being left to liberals.) The rebelliousness of the detective hero—his contempt for hypocrisy, the way he usually finds himself pitted against the interests of the powerful, his thirst for justice—makes him a figure who cannot be controlled or counted upon to uphold the status quo. These contradictions recall Norman Mailer's meditation on the nature of police: "Supposed to be law-enforcers, they tend to conceive of themselves as the law.... They are attached umbilically to the concept of honesty, they are profoundly corrupt. They possess more physical courage than the average man, they are unconscionable bullies; they serve the truth, they are psychopathic liars."

In Raymond's Factory novels, murder is a convenient means of disposing of the undesirable.

The nameless cop hero of the Factory novels—we'll call him No Name—is one of those denizens of detective stories and police procedurals who get into trouble because they break the rules and rub the top brass the wrong way. No Name has no time for niceties or regulations or respect for his superiors (one book ends with him breaking a supervisor's jaw). He's an outcast, but not because he's a brutal bastard. Rather, he's an outcast because, in a society that has given up nearly all notions of justice or service, he takes his job seriously.

The police division No Name works for is Unexplained Deaths, the sinkhole reserved for the cases that will bring the cops who solve them no publicity, no promotion. "We work on obscure, unimportant, apparently irrelevant deaths of people who don't matter and who never did," says No Name in *He Died With His Eyes Open*. "We have the lowest budget, we're last in line for allocations, and promotion is so slow that most of us never get past the rank of sergeant.... No murder is casual to us, and no murder is unimportant, even though murder happens the whole time in a city like this."

The voice may sound familiar to readers of detective fiction: it's the hard-boiled hero, cynical on the outside, wounded on the inside. But pay attention to the stray lines: "people who don't matter and who never did" and "we're last in line for allocations." Then consider these seemingly tossed-off remarks about the deaths No Name investigates over the course of the books: "There was nothing about Staniland in the paper. Staniland wasn't news." "Nobody was ever caught for her, and Mrs. Mayhew made four lines in the Watford Observer." No Name on his superiors' reaction to a double murder: "It's the press that bothers them up there...not the bodies." The England of the Factory series is a place where the idea of government service has become, at best, quaint, and where murder has become a convenient means of disposing of the undesirable.

Other novelists fantasized about Thatcher planning the obsolescence of those people who didn't fit into her agenda. In McEwan's *The Child in Time*, the nameless future Prime Minister (never referred to by a gender-specific pronoun—the implication is that Thatcher would rule forever) institutes a program requiring beggars to purchase a government license, thus eliminating thousands from the unemployment rolls. In Coe's *The Winshaw Legacy*, the most considered and murderous of the anti-Thatcher novels, an architect of Tory rule prohibits the use of the word "hospital" in all discussions of the National Health Service. "We call them 'provider units,'" he writes. "The hospital becomes a shop, the operation becomes a piece of merchandise, and normal business practices prevail: pile 'em high and sell 'em cheap. The beautiful simplicity of this idea astounds me."

The beautiful, ruthless simplicity of the Factory novels—the title of the series refers to the London Police HQ—is that Raymond rewrites the basic ethos of the classic detective novel. Where once murder had been a rent in the social fabric, now it is something like a means of social control—Thatcher's method of governance as social engineering taken to its most logical and brutal extreme.

Raymond, who was born Robin Cook in 1931 to the family of a textile magnate, dropped out of Eton, worked at menial jobs and spent a lot of time carousing with what might be called "an undesirable element." He published his first novel, the wonderfully titled *The Crust on Its Uppers*, in 1962. The book, its latest edition helpfully annotated with a glossary of Cockney rhyming slang, evokes a time when the criminal worlds of London's East End mixed with the worlds of bohemia and celebrity. It would only be a few years after the book was published that the dapper gangster bosses of the East End, the Kray twins, Ronnie and Reggie, would be photographed by David Bailey. (Raymond died in 1994.)

The Crust on Its Uppers belongs to the select group of novels that depict the varied circus of London life, books like Colin MacInnes's *Absolute Beginners* and Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (the story of Trinidadian immigrants, which can number among its descendants work by Hanif Kureishi, Zadie Smith and Monica Ali). It's the Factory novels, though, that remain Raymond's strongest work. Each one follows a similar pattern: No Name is ordered to investigate a death that none of the careerists in the police force have time for. After receiving a phone call from the big boss, who is only ever identified as "the voice," cautioning him not to stir up trouble, No Name, motivated by a sense of urgency, a passion for justice and outrage at the abuses done to the powerless, proceeds to do just that.

Hard-boiled heroes are invariably loners. For No Name, loneliness is the personal hell of having a wife who has been institutionalized for murdering their daughter (perhaps the grimmest back story I've ever encountered for any hard-boiled detective). But that hell is also a result of the cursed role that Raymond has devised for him, turning him into something like a figure out of myth, eternally doomed to listen to voices speaking to him from beyond the grave.

And it's death to whom the victims in these books owe their voices. The alcoholic writer in *He Died With His Eyes Open*—having, like No Name, lost his wife and daughter—spends his days in a pub enduring the insults of its patrons, pines for the prostitute who spurns him and upon his demise leaves behind a series of tapes to which No Name listens obsessively. The AIDS-infected prostitute murdered in *I Was Dora Suarez* leaves a journal that No Name doesn't so much read as flagellate himself with. In *How the Dead Live*, No Name overhears taped conversations between a doctor gone mad with grief and his now-dead wife, who had told him he was the only one she trusted to remove the cancers defiling her body.

Their stories are baroque, bizarre, even repellent. The characters inhabit the outer limits of the fringe of those who can be thought of as society's victims, and yet the extremity of their tales marks them as doomed messiahs, their suffering meant to stand for, if not absolve, the suffering of all victims. And while the books end with the cases solved, the evildoers either dead or

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destroyed, there is no sense of triumph, no illusion that justice has been restored. "My tears were not for me," No Name says at the end of *I Was Dora Suarez*; "they were for the rightful fury of the people."

That line can be taken as either equal to the anguish that has preceded it—as the benediction to the horrific *I Was Dora Suarez*—or an example of overwrought writing. Because he wrote hard-boiled detective fiction, Raymond was prone to sentimentality disguised as the dirty, unvarnished truth about the world, and, especially when No Name is threatening an uncooperative witness or showing he's uncowed by a superior's rank, the books can show a relish for aggression. In his introduction to *He Died With His Eyes Open*, crime novelist James Sallis tries gamely to bring up the perpetually unresolved question of literature as it pertains to the detective novel. It's a question that critics usually pretend to settle either by falsely elevating the work in question to literature or, equally falsely, by citing aesthetic flaws (like Raymond's sentimentality) and the reliance on formula to argue that a "low" genre can never touch us in the way that literature does.

The fury that rises in No Name cannot disguise the fact that Raymond has written an elegy.

But by and large, the critical classifying of works—different from delineating their character and nuances—is a mug's game, a way for critics to turn themselves into clerks more interested in shelving a book than in explicating it. Sallis suggests there is a critical duty in experiencing "literature truly written from the edge of the human experience," and it's silly not to acknowledge that such works, by necessity, often can't stay true to their subject while existing within fixed aesthetic parameters. But *I Was Dora Suarez*, the fourth book in the Factory cycle, makes even that defense inadequate. The book provoked Marilyn Stasio, the sober, straightforward crime-fiction critic for *The New York Times Book Review*, to this lyrical appraisal: "If you think of the act of writing as a game of chicken between the author and his talent, then Derek Raymond is one author who achieves his ecstasy by sailing off cliffs. Everything about 'I Was Dora Suarez' shrieks of the joy and pain of going too far."

That's a superb encapsulation of the tone of the book—and still, it doesn't prepare you for the book itself. Writing about *I Was Dora Suarez* presents the temptation to play at the critical form of hard-boiled braggadocio, saying in effect to the reader, "I was tough enough to take it. Are you?"

I'm not sure I am.

Reading the book made me nauseous. Rereading it for this piece, I found it necessary to restrict my time with it to daylight hours. Reading it after dark gave me nightmares. Nor do I want to play at listing the specifics of the book, thereby feeding the kind of interest that will send people to it for a kick, the way they go see the latest piece of horror-movie torture porn. I don't know if *I Was Dora Suarez* can be called literature at all. If it's possible for a book to be utterly repugnant and deeply compassionate at the same time, then *I Was Dora Suarez* is.

Raymond opens with a twenty-eight-page chapter, the vast majority of which is devoted to the rape-torture-murder of Dora and the murder of Betty Carstairs, the impoverished pensioner who has taken Dora in, making their relationship one of the only human connections in Raymond's novels motivated by pity, compassion and love. Raymond takes no pleasure in what he describes. The crimes are graphic but not lingered over, and written without any hint of titillation or the "Lookee what I can do!" showboating of Bret Easton Ellis. (The same can't be said for the masochistic ritual the killer refers to as "his punishment"; it's in these passages that the book verges on *Grand Guignol*.)

In some ways, we have to get beyond that opening to comprehend the true awfulness. That comes in the second chapter, when we see the crime scene through No Name's eyes. Before No Name even takes in the corpses, Raymond writes of Betty and Dora's flat—squalid, dirty, damp, crammed with clothing and mementos that are as dead as the bodies in the other room, things that long ago ceased to have contact with anything living. The deaths are an unmatched blasphemy, but the alternative, life in this place, has its own cruelty.

The book contains moments of unembarrassed emotion, such as No Name kissing Dora's corpse on her matted, bloodstained hair and telling her everything will be all right now. The futility of that compassion, and No Name's compulsion to express it, are piercing. But what sticks with you, for good and ill, are the mounting horrors—scatological, clinical, sexual—that go beyond even that opening. *I Was Dora Suarez* finds Raymond's most undeniable metaphor for a society in which people have become goods to be used and discarded. But it's an impossible book to recommend. How can you judge the quality of a book when it's hard enough to deal with the fact of it?

The best novel in the Factory sequence is the third, *How the Dead Live*. That title (later filched, by his own admission, by Will Self) sounds like one of the grim gags Charles Willeford used to name his Hoke Moseley novels—*New Hope for the Dead*. What's between the covers reads as if Raymond Chandler had collaborated with Mary Shelley. No Name is sent to the village of Thornhill, where a local aristocrat, the French wife of the town's doctor, hasn't been seen in six months. The woman was beloved for voice recitals that everyone came to hear, enjoying the hospitality of having a grand house opened to them. The last memories anyone has of her are of a few appearances in town wearing a mysterious veil. During his sojourn No Name encounters the entire cast of characters needed for the tale of a two-fisted cop uncovering the dirty secrets of a picture-perfect small town.

Except that nothing is picture-perfect in *How the Dead Live*. Rot and decay hang over everything, the persistent sense of there never being enough light or heat, of everything marinating in the stench of damp. The doctor's mansion is a mockery of its grandeur. There are rooms of ruined books and mildewed furniture, and one touch that's like a photo negative of Miss Havisham's realm of dust and decay: a grand piano whose keys are choked by the moss that has taken them over.

But it's not appreciably different from what's happening in London. As No Name drives out of the city at night on the way to Thornhill, this is what he sees:

> Sickening errors, democratically arrived at of course, lay [on] either side of the road as I drove west out of London. Blocks of semi-abandoned streets made dead ends of effort where people who had tried to start something—anything—had been crushed by the dull triumphant logic of the state.... In further sad, narrow streets...lay ruined three-storey houses that the council neither had the money to restore, nor corruption interest in pulling down. These were all dark—the power, the water cut off in them, life itself cut off there at this

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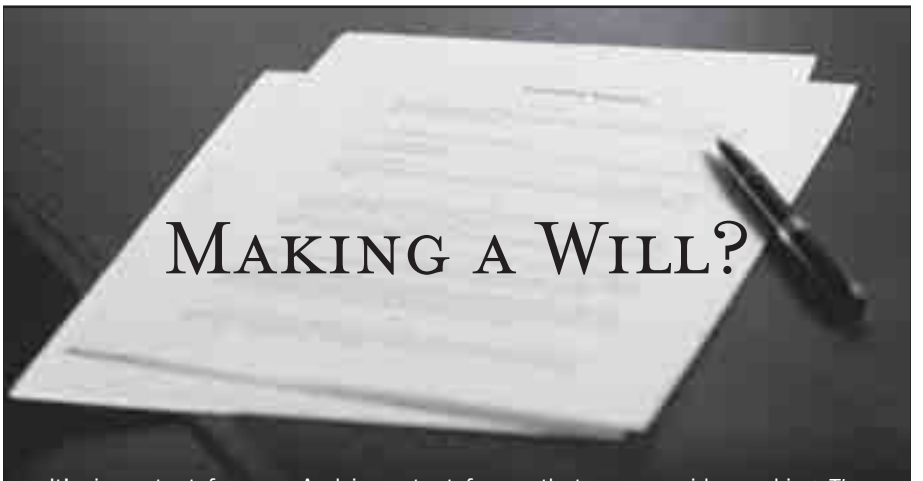
> wrong end of winter. Yet life still did cling on in them, I knew. Uncivilized, mad life; these rank buildings that had housed self-respecting families once were now occupied by squatters of any kind—the desperate last fugitives of a beaten, abandoned army, their dignity, rights and occupations gone (or never known), their hope gone, tomorrow gone.

Just as the form of this novel seems to travel back in time—it begins as an urban detective novel, then turns into an English country-house mystery, before settling into a tale of mad passion that Poe might have understood—in that long passage England itself seems to recede. Just a page before, No Name had been having a beer in Oxford Circus. Dangerous, semi-abandoned streets give way to ones where the mad life that does exist is hidden behind dark ruined houses. And suddenly it's as if those few lights, the families locked up in their flats, are Druid tribes, huddled round the fire against an impenetrable night wherein lurk things they can't even bring themselves to imagine.

The tale of gothic ardor that is gradually revealed in *How the Dead Live* might have seemed to belong to another time if Raymond hadn't already painted a portrait of England having been driven back to an earlier age. Only, in this dark age, the country's glory is not ahead of it.

"My work tells me that our history is over," says No Name a few pages earlier in *How the Dead Live*; "we are all over. I know that in my work I am supposed to represent a future, but I find that impossible when I look back at the past." Or, as Johnny Rotten sang ten years before Raymond wrote those words, "No future for you." But the glee and fury in Rotten's voice, the suggestion that his scourging nihilism might express the possibility of feeling alive, if not good, is quite different from the weary melancholy of the Factory novels. Even the fury that rises in No Name cannot sustain itself, cannot disguise the fact that Raymond has written an elegy. The possibility of the evil that could be given full description in a sequel—an evil made possible when people are loosed from any sense of obligation, empowered by the sense that transgressing imagined limits is the way to self-fulfillment—has already been established here. "Murder happens the whole time in a city like this," Raymond wrote. The corpse on the slab in these books is finally England itself. But Raymond harbored no hope that the killer would be brought to justice. ■



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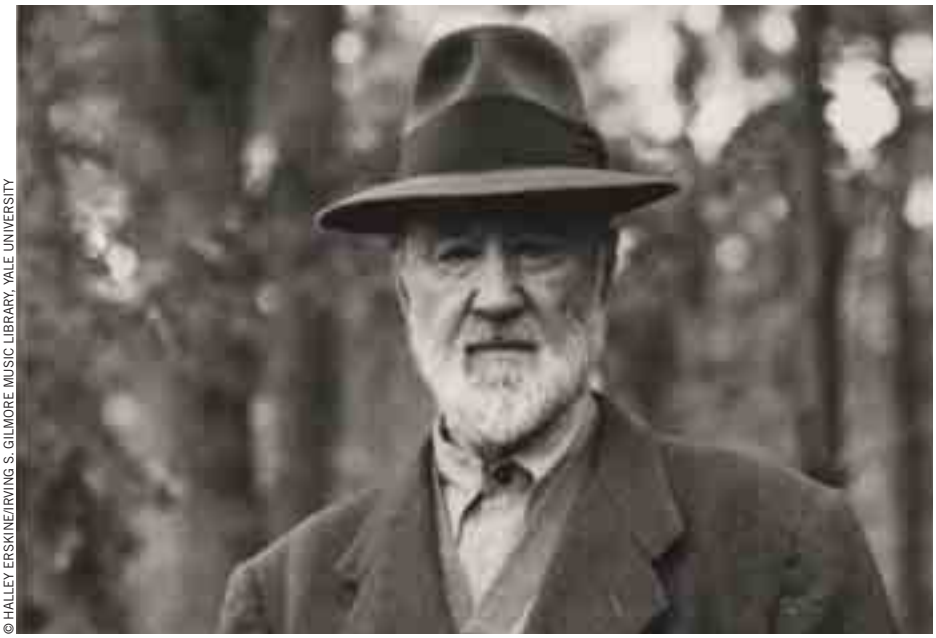

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Charles Ives in West Redding, Connecticut, circa 1946

Ives's Ears

by DAVID SCHIFF

Long before his death in 1954, at 80, Charles Ives seemed less like the father of American music than an eccentric uncle whose antic behavior and uncensored opinions at birthdays and funerals conscript his relatives into manufacturing an endless series of apologies and disclaimers. In his songs, symphonies and sonatas, Ives furnished America's musical past with a future. He linked the sounds of the nineteenth century—marches and hymns and ragtime ditties—to the complex new harmonies and rhythms of modern music, and he forced their fusion with visionary zeal. He also referred to musicians he didn't respect, or who didn't respect him, as "sissies" and bewailed the feminization of American musical life. Revolted by the mixing of art and commerce, he refused to pursue a career as a musician or even to copyright his music. Although he published some of his scores, most of his work remained in a state of editorial chaos, overwritten with corrections, pentimenti, comments and instructions. And he often fudged the provenance of his compositions, claiming they were written earlier than was the case in order to appear more innovative. Ives even lied about his own father. He claimed that when he was a student at Yale in the 1890s, his father, who had been an Army bandleader during the Civil War, advised him to ignore the criticisms offered by his music professor, Horatio Parker, a musical conservative who favored the practice of tonal music enshrined in the textbooks of the day. If the anecdote were true, Ives's father would have been counseling his son from the grave.

Charles Ives Reconsidered
By Gayle Sherwood Magee.
Illinois. 231 pp. $35.

During the past decade, the picture of Ives has metamorphosed from eccentric uncle into cagey impresario and entrepreneur, a process explained by Gayle Sherwood Magee in her aptly titled *Charles Ives Reconsidered*. The most striking change in Ives's image concerns the scope of his *oeuvre*, which was enriched by the publication in 1999 of James Sinclair's *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Music of Charles Ives*. Sinclair unearthed, re-edited and assembled to completion many works long considered lost or fragmentary, such as "Ragtime Dances" and the "Third Orchestral Set." Ives heavily revised much of his music, and Sinclair culled from the revisions worthy variant readings of even familiar, frequently heard compositions. You can now purchase a recording of the *Emerson Concerto*, an earlier, orchestral version of the first movement of the *Concord Sonata*. And if you listen to the fine recording of the familiar *Three Places in New England* by Michael Tilson Thomas (our reigning Ives-meister) and the San Francisco Symphony, you may be surprised to hear a chorus singing in the third movement, "The Housatonic at Stockbridge." The choral melody, taken from Ives's song with the same title and already present in the symphony as an instrumental line, lifts Ives's picturesque triptych into the realm of Beethoven's Ninth—or at least into the neighborhood of Ives's Fourth Symphony, which was once considered unplayable but is now widely considered to be the crowning glory of American symphonic composition, the musical counterpart of *Moby-Dick* or *Leaves of Grass*. The recent recording of the *Concord Sonata* by the French pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard (who also accompanies Met mezzo Susan Graham in a selection of songs) is a sign that Ives's work has even found a place in the international repertory.

With Ives's *oeuvre* securely anchored in the musical mainstream, his life looks different. When the music seemed interesting mainly for its crackpot eccentricities and quaint country humor (the "Currier and Ives" Ives), the composer was viewed as an isolated, anachronistic character from the rural American past. In Magee's telling he seems mad like one of the Mad Men, consciously shaping his personal, professional and artistic personas in ways that would guarantee the ultimate triumph of his unique musical legacy. In retrospect, even Ives's famed eccentricity looks like a clever ploy by a master salesman who recognized that, at particular moments, nuttiness would sell. The newly reconsidered Ives made all the right moves.

Magee caps her book with a potent example of Ives's promotional cunning. In 1951, Leonard Bernstein conducted the world premiere of Ives's Second Symphony, composed between 1908 and 1910. (The score had remained unperformed even after Ives was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his Third Symphony in 1947.) This accessible and good-humored work is far removed from Ives's wilder experiments and is clearly indebted to Dvorák and Brahms as well as Stephen Foster, whose melodies echo throughout all four movements. Although he conducted few other Ives compositions, Bernstein performed this symphony often, and I remember well his performance of the last movement on a Young People's Concert broadcast in April 1961. Bernstein told his audience that Charles Ives was a

> salty old Yankee who lived, up to his death a few years ago, in Danbury, Connecticut.… He was also one of the first American composers to use folk songs and folk dances in his concert music.… You will also hear *real* barn

David Schiff, a professor of music at Reed College, is the composer of the opera Gimpel the Fool *and author of books on the music of Elliott Carter and George Gershwin.*

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dance tunes like "Turkey in the Straw," and *real* folk songs such as "Long, Long Ago," and a *real* Stephen Foster tune, "Camptown Races," and a real bugle call, "Reveille," and to top it all off a *real* quotation from that grand old American tune "Columbia the Gem of the Ocean." It all adds up to a rousing jamboree, like a Fourth of July celebration, finished off at the very end by a wild yelp of laughter made by the orchestra playing a chord of all the notes in the rainbow at once—as if to say WOW!

Like many of Ives's boosters, Bernstein tinkered with the truth to sell the music. Ives lived most of his adult life on Manhattan's Upper East Side, and he rarely quoted folk tunes: much of his music is based on the hymns he learned as a church organist in various denominations in his teens and 20s. More to the point, with the aid of Henry Cowell and Lou Harrison, Ives produced a new version of the Second Symphony for Bernstein's premiere (Ives was 76 at the time and in frail health), and the WOW! moment punctuating the end of the score was tailored to the tastes of the quintessentially WOW! conductor. Previous versions had ended in a much more predictable fashion, with a tonic triad, just as Brahms and Dvorák would have done. With the showbiz acumen of a George Abbott or a Harold Prince, and with a little help from his friends, Ives packed the ending of the Second Symphony with a jovial musical charge, like the sound of popping balloons and firecrackers, that gave the Young People's Concert the feeling of a birthday party. I was 15 at the time, and I ran out to buy the recording as soon as I could.

Magee challenges received ideas about Ives in three interconnected areas—his medical history, the dating of his compositions and the nature of his involvement with the musical marketplace—and while some of her findings are intriguing, none are explosive. Earlier accounts of Ives's life reported a series of heart attacks and nervous breakdowns that began in 1906 and had by 1920 virtually ended his work as a composer and his career as an insurance executive. Jan Swafford's colorfully written *Charles Ives: A Life With Music* (1996) describes the elder Ives as a victim of chronic debilitating forms of diabetes and bipolar disorder. Ives's father died of a stroke when he was 49; the fact that Ives lived to be 80 is usually credited to the ministrations of his wife, Harmony, who was a trained nurse. According to psychoanalytic studies, Ives was burdened with neuroses about his father and the question of his musical originality, and was prone to bouts of misogyny and homophobia. By 1921, such a profoundly crippled Ives would have been incapable of composing or carefully managing his reputation.

Magee rejects these diagnoses. She finds no evidence of heart attacks in the medical records and dismisses the psychoanalytic readings of Ives's character as anachronistic. Instead, she takes seriously the diagnosis offered by Ives's doctors: neurasthenia. This condition, which manifested itself in physical exhaustion and heart palpitations, was the national ailment of the Progressive Era, the downside of the "strenuous life" that Teddy Roosevelt embodied and demanded of America's ruling elite. Born into a patrician banking family, a BMOC at Yale, married into an even more distinguished New England line and a successful corporate innovator, Ives was well ensconced in the elite. Today neurasthenia is no longer an accepted medical term, but in taking it seriously Magee reveals much about Ives's privileged background (which he downplayed by crafting a rustic persona) and also the extent to which his double life, composing for four or five hours after putting in a full day at his insurance firm, was bound to take a toll. Still, her reconsideration brings no new medical evidence to the table, and consequently Ives's physical condition over the last third of his life remains a mystery, as Magee admits in the closing sentence of her book: "Understanding Ives and his music from this unvarnished perspective may yet prove the greatest challenge of all."

In his insurance business, Ives was a master of marketing. Was the same true of his music?

The issue of the dating of Ives's compositions also remains unresolved in Magee's account. She claims that Ives assigned his compositions the dates of their earliest sketches and speculates that he may have been encouraged in this practice by Henry Cowell, a younger composer with whom Ives became closely associated in the 1920s. According to Magee, Cowell backdated his compositions so that he would appear to be more of a pioneer; Ives, in the 1920s, similarly wanted to appear to be a precursor of European Modernism, not a follower. Magee argues, however, that such works as *Three Places in New England*, the *Holidays Symphony* and the *Concord Sonata* were all composed during and in response to World War I, and that Ives not only continued to compose through the 1920s but, encouraged by Cowell, continued to rewrite his music to give it a more aggressively Modernist sound. For whatever reasons, Ives left much of his music unfinished or open-ended; as shown by the rewriting of the Second Symphony, he was composing, or at least recomposing, almost to the time of his death. Perhaps the prospect of continued recomposition of much of his work kept him going.

Magee does not explore the aesthetic dimensions of updating. If Ives's music was composed a decade or more later than once thought, it could also have been more responsive to European Modernist music than Ives wanted to let on. In the first decade of the twentieth century, when Ives was beginning his business career in New York City, Gustav Mahler was often in town performing works like Debussy's *Nocturnes* and *Iberia*, Busoni's *Berceuse élégiaque*, Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* and his own First, Second and Fourth Symphonies. If he attended Mahler's performances, Ives would have been intrigued by any of these pieces. In *Fêtes*, Debussy's second *Nocturne*, a lively dance is interrupted by an approaching march that swells in volume and becomes ever more riotous—an effect heard in Ives's "Putnam's Camp" and "Decoration Day." Moreover, while Magee conjures up rich interpretations from Ives's major works by dating many of them to World War I, she fails to address the fact that they all sprang from the so-called experimental pieces that Ives began to write in 1906, beginning with *The Unanswered Question* and *Central Park in the Dark*. These still-astounding works really do precede anything comparable in European music—not that there was anything comparable until perhaps after World War II. These miniatures present the textures and rhythms that Ives would later expand into extended musical panoramas: superimposed musical layers moving at different tempos and with different harmonies that evoked a sense of cosmic mystery. They are the core of Ives's achievement, yet Magee is at a loss to explain them. Indeed, she mentions *The Unanswered Question* only as evidence of Ives's current fame because the title of the piece served as a running gag on an episode of *Frasier*.

Magee treats Ives's engagement with political issues during World War I as a sign of a greater awareness of public taste than he is usually credited with. His evocations of earlier wars in "The St. Gaudens" and "Putnam's Camp" were intended to rekindle patriotic fervor, while songs like "Tom Sails Away" expressed the widely felt anxiety over military

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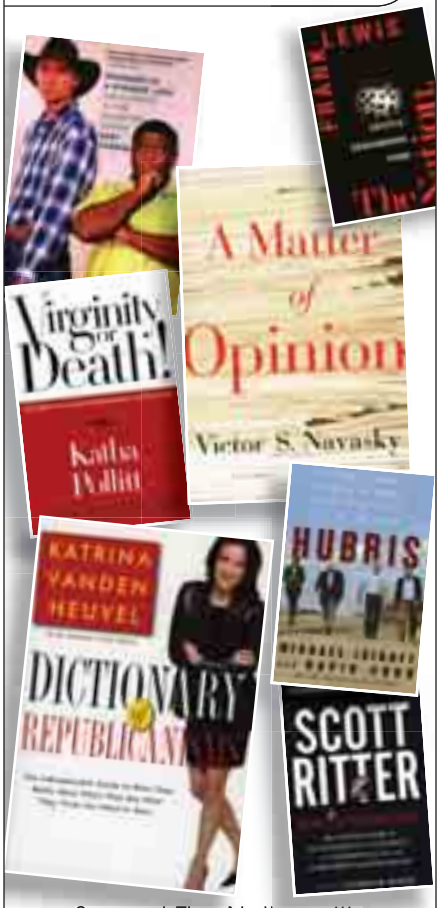

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conscription. In his insurance business, Ives was a master of salesmanship and marketing. Why, Magee reasons, should it be any different in his music? At a time when modern composers, like Leo Ornstein and Cowell, promoted their music by performing it themselves, Ives devised an alternative strategy whereby he acted as his own publisher, publicist and even patron. In the 1920s Ives allied himself with the emerging school of American ultra-Modernists, which included Cowell, Varèse and Carl Ruggles. Ives subsidized their concerts and Cowell's magazine, *New Music Quarterly*; in return, they programmed him on their concerts and the magazine published his music. According to Magee, this alliance encouraged Ives to make his music more dissonant, pushing it toward the unprecedented sonic chaos of the last movement of the Fourth Symphony. At the same time, though, Ives supplied Cowell with memos about his early life, which Cowell and his wife would draw on to fashion the influential image of Ives at the center of the biography they published in 1955, a year after his death. "In Cowell's writings," Magee explains, "Ives underwent a startling transformation from a nervous, hermetically creative New York businessman into a deep-rooted Connecticut Yankee who preserved long-lost regional music in his compositions."

I wonder, though, if Ives's marketing skill is a strength that only a musicologist could value. After all, posthumous recognition is not the usual measure of a successful sales strategy. Ives was a man of considerable means, yet he was incapable of gaining a foothold in the concert world with anything resembling the success of George Gershwin or Aaron Copland, both of whom came from far humbler backgrounds and were writing music that was, in its way, as far removed from the nineteenth-century Germanic classics as Ives's works. For whatever reasons, Ives remained convinced throughout his life that the regular concert world would reject his music. When the Bernstein premiere of the Second Symphony was broadcast, Ives, according to Swafford, listened quietly and then, as the applause began, "spat into the fireplace and walked into the kitchen without a word."

Magee's book is a model of contemporary musicology, sympathetically sober in its judgments and interdisciplinary in its methods. Yet in the end it tells us much more about Ives's milieu than his music. I'm a composer, not a musicologist, and I think it's worth trying to imagine a different way of understanding what's unique about Ives's music. After a Hartford violinist offered Ives a sharp criticism of his First Violin Sonata, the composer famously asked, "Why do I like to work in this way and get all set up over what just upsets other people…? No one else seems to hear it the same way. Are my ears on wrong?" Let's imagine that they were on "wrong," that Ives was differently eared in a particular way. When my father began to lose his hearing, he complained that hearing aides were no help; they amplified all sounds, not the ones he wanted to hear. Imagine Ives as having congenital hearing aids. When most people listen to conversation or music, they are able to focus on the relevant sounds and filter out other noises. Ives may have lacked this ability or, conversely, may have had a special ability to listen inclusively, to register all the sounds his ears picked up. I know musicians who are acutely aware of the tones produced by room fans and electrical fixtures, sounds that most people block out. The late Stuart Feder, author of a compelling psychoanalytic study of Ives, recognized this quality in Ives when he pointed out that he "entered the world with a predisposition toward music that affected the nature of his perception of reality." In his childhood, and perhaps particularly in charged circumstances like holiday celebrations, which provide the subject of many of his compositions, Ives may have experienced every sound he perceived, and every emotion attendant upon those sounds, as music. We can then hear much of Ives's music as Proustian attempts to recapture and re-create these intensely felt experiences from early life.

If we imagine this differently eared, alternatively wired Ives, a lot of what critics have found problematic about his music and career falls away. Like other great composers, he probably possessed an acute and unaccountable impulse to use sounds expressively. As he matured he had to balance the need to acquire skills through musical education against the preservation of this impulse, a conflict he explained later in terms of the colliding advice of his father and Horatio Parker, his Yale music professor. As Magee makes clear, Ives remained faithful to both his father and Parker, particularly if we think of these two figures as emblems of two versions of musical culture, Jacksonian populism and Gilded Age sacralization. Most of Ives's music stems from the repertory of his father's marching bands and the popular hymns he played as a church organist during his boyhood. But Ives did not pursue the career of a march composer like John Philip Sousa, or a hymn composer like Dudley Buck. Instead, he envisioned a music that would exalt marches and hymns to the spiritual heights he encountered in the peak experiences of childhood and, though he did not easily admit it, in particular works of classical music.

When Ives was 20 he attended his first

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opera at the Met—*Götterdämmerung*. In few other works of classical music would he have encountered a visionary framework capable of bearing his extended experience of sound. I think the closing minutes of this opera—the immolation scene in which Valhalla is set aflame, the Rhine overflows its banks and human history seems to start all over again—set the expressive mark for Ives's later music. You can hear the descending bass line of the last phrase of Wagner's opera reiterated at the end of Ives's equally apocalyptic Fourth Symphony. When we imagine Ives's artistic project this way, we can forget about the Oedipal convolutions of the psycho-biographers and also, I hope, ignore the tired issues of American and European musical styles, of populism and elitism. And we can permanently retire the term "maverick" as a label for a composer who simply and successfully remained true to his own special ears. ■

In Our Orbit

Between the Dead and the Living

by BARRY SCHWABSKY

Jack Spicer was hardly unknown during his lifetime, despite seeming to do everything possible to keep his reputation under wraps. Notoriously, he did not want his work distributed outside the San Francisco Bay Area, his home for most of his adult life; nearly thirty years after his death from alcoholism in 1965—he was only 40—he was still considered, as Norman Finkelstein later put it, "the almost exclusive property of a small band of mainly West Coast poets and critics (most of whom misread him as a post-structuralist)." Spicer was the prototypical DIY indie purist *avant la lettre*. A 1957 "Admonition" to himself begins, "Tell everyone to have guts/Do it yourself." His reputation began to spread more widely after 1975, when Black Sparrow Press published *The Collected Books of Jack Spicer*, now out of print. A new collection, *My Vocabulary Did This to Me: The Collected Poetry of Jack Spicer* (Wesleyan, $35), edited by Peter Gizzi, poetry editor for *The Nation*, and Kevin Killian, a poet who is also co-author of a Spicer biography, returns one of the great American visionaries to print—expanded and with a revised chronology.

Some of Gizzi and Killian's additions to Spicer's *oeuvre* may be controversial. Notably, they have included a sequence of letters written to a young poet named James Alexander, with whom Spicer had fallen in love, on the grounds that "Spicer believed that letters could be poems"—true enough, the idea or form of the letter underlies much of his poetic work—and included them in his readings; but in a 1956 book review, Spicer had expounded on the difficulty of distinguishing poetry from letters in the work of Emily Dickinson. Yet the letters to Alexander, for all their poetic intensity, are immediately distinguished from anything Spicer ever published as poetry by their charm—by a whimsical seductiveness he never allowed to enter his canonical work. What Spicer recognized as poetry was always fierce and contentious and, despite the devices that feign otherwise, written to no one and for no one. Through parody and pastiche he exploded every form he touched. Just before he died, he finished *A Book of Magazine Verse*—"poems for magazines which would not print them" (including *The Nation*). Though he dreamed of a community of poets and did what he could to create one around himself, his poetry communicates a vast isolation; this is its strength, for it gives his vulnerable and unmelodious words an immense space in which to resonate.

More urgent than the letter as such to Spicer's poetry is a confrontation with the novel as a genre. (One section of his most elaborate book, *The Heads of the Town Up to the Aether*, 1960, is "A Fake Novel About the Life of Arthur Rimbaud.") In essence, the form of the letter enters into the poems as it does into an epistolary novel; Spicer puts novelistic devices to decidedly non-narrative uses. At the dawn of Romanticism Friedrich von Schlegel discerned the end of the lyric poem, which henceforth was "constantly to be woven into novels." Likewise, in his mature work (beginning with *After Lorca*, 1957) Spicer cultivated a method of writing poetry that emphasized not the single isolated poem, nor yet the grand, accumulative lifelong projects of the Modernists—such as Pound's *Cantos*, Williams's *Paterson*, Olson's *Maximus Poems* or Zukofsky's "*A*"—but rather what he called "serial poems," self-contained book- or chapbook-length sequences in which the connections between poems (often prose poems) become as telling as the connections between words in each one. "Poems should echo and re-echo against each other," Spicer wrote. "They should create resonances. They cannot live alone any more than we can." The poetry and prose of *After Lorca* echo not only among themselves but with that of the Spanish poet whom they alternately address and ventriloquize. Spicer's serial method allowed him to weave a dense mesh of myth, metaphor, literary allusion and searing emotional candor through his text while letting each line stand brutally blunt—almost physically perspicuous—to the point where it could be mistaken for something artless. As a result, his books have a structural concision that protects them from the self-indulgent longueurs as well as the ostentatious erudition that sometimes mar the Modernist epics.

Like all of Spicer's best work, *After Lorca* is "an argument between the dead and the living." He was haunted by Jean Cocteau's image of Orpheus as a poet taking dictation from the beyond through radio broadcasts only he could hear—he liked to say his own messages might be coming from Martians. But as he wrote in his 1965 book *Language*, "The trouble with comparing a poet with a radio is that radios/ don't develop scar tissue." Three years before his death he wrote what reads like his own epitaph:

> He died from killing himself.
> His public mask was broken
> because
> He no longer had a public mask.
> People retrieved his poems
> from wastebaskets. They had
> Long hearts.

The poem from which that is taken is indeed one that Gizzi and Killian have salvaged from, if not the trash, in any case the filing cabinet in a friend's basement. One can only be grateful. ■

Barry Schwabsky is an American art critic and poet living in London.

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LIBRAIRIE ARTHÈME FAYARD

Guy Debord (left), Michèle Bernstein and Asger Jorn at a Paris cafe, 1961

Partisans of Oblivion

by JOSHUA CLOVER

Guy Debord's best lines were ghostwritten.

They are most known from the pamphlet *The Return of the Durutti Column*, which along with *The Poverty of Student Life* catalyzed an uprising at the University of Strasbourg that would shortly unfold into the student occupations and general strike collectively known as 1968. Distributed free in 1966, the pamphlet was manifesto, oratory, comic. Its text was largely provided by the Situationist International and its leader, Guy Debord, the postwar period's most trenchant and implacable political philosopher (and surely the one whose thoughts have been the most caricatured).

One particular frame, a blank back and forth between Pancho and Cisco—"The Situationist Cowboys," as they would be known—has had a long and varied afterlife, leaping from student revolt to photocopied talisman to album art and T-shirt image for Manchester's Factory Records; of late it has shown up on the Poetry Foundation's website, making some point or another.

"What do you work on?" asks the first cowboy, in a white hat. "Reification," comes the answer. "I see," says white hat. "It's serious work, with big books and lots of papers on a big table."

"Nope," avers black hat, whom we understand to be speaking in the place of Debord. "I drift. Mostly I drift." The phrase itself is a ghost. It captures the insouciance that in our era can no longer be attached to radical politics, to the ruthless critique of what exists. And exactly because such a combination, so urgently wished for, can no longer be imagined without this phrase, it is doomed to circulate without relief, like Dante's Paolo and Francesca borne about endlessly on an awful wind that is the wind of history. Also, it's a great pickup line.

That's how it started near the beginning of *All the King's Horses*, Michèle Bernstein's 1960 roman à clef capturing the early hours of the Situationist International. In one version of Situationist myth, Debord talked Bernstein into writing a commercial novel, a knockoff of Françoise Sagan's madly successful midcentury chick lit. That suggests the style. It's a lark, a scam.

The slight plot can be as easily coordinated. It takes *Dangerous Liaisons* and the 1942 Marcel Carné film *The Night Visitors*—both of which involve a supernally merciless, sensual couple debauching innocents—and asks their bare bones to dance once more. Gilles, with the help of his lover Geneviève, seduces the dewy Carole, a Patricia Franchini *manquée* down to "the mussed bangs, the short blond hair, dressed like a model child in a white crewneck and a blue sweater." It's during the seduction that the famous exchange takes place between Gilles and Carole. Their affair, and Geneviève's cor-

All the King's Horses
By Michèle Bernstein.
Translated by John Kelsey.
Semiotext(e). 143 pp. $14.95.

Joshua Clover's most recent book of poems is The Totality for Kids.

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responding liaisons (including with Bertrand the poet and mildly modern Hélène), provide the spare narrative. There is the promised drifting around Paris, a vacation to the provinces and then the fall *rentrée*, rifted with discreet sex and a few tears; the whole thing is over in 88 pages, with dalliances discarded and Gilles and Geneviève affirming their bond.

The pair are, of course, shades of Debord and Bernstein, founding members of the SI and for a time married. He famously never worked; she found occasional employment as a writer for hire—of, among other things, horoscopes for horses (practice for her later position as a literary critic). She would write a second novel, *The Night*, close in plot but far from the primal scene of the SI.

The novel ends with the words "I think we're late," but the SI was early: first as an artistic avant-garde whose ideas are still being digested (most especially that of *détournement*, a repurposing of phrases and images that would characterize postmodernism), and then as a roiling cadre of political theorists who early diagnosed late capitalism's domination of everyday life. They left no novels but this. Long out of print and sold to Situationist fanatics for astonishing prices in bookshop back rooms, *All the King's Horses* was reprinted in France four years ago. Perhaps on the basis of size alone, it was bound to leap the Atlantic only to land in the cargo-pants cult of Semiotext(e) pocket books. That series divides itself between "Foreign Agents" (tilted toward shards of French theory) and "Native Agents" (more along personal-is-political lines). *All the King's Horses*, officially part of the latter line, more or less splits the difference. This happenstance points toward much of what is remarkable about the SI: never has such a theoretically sophisticated band been so insistent in its demands for everyday life—not living so as to change the world but changing the world so as to live. Or, as they put matters early on, "the point is not to put poetry in the service of revolution, but to put revolution in the service of poetry." Life would be a practice of theory; this is the import of "Mainly I drift." It is a refusal of the life on offer: an absurd stroll, a *dérive*.

At the same time, few would dispute that the SI was all too conventional in some ways, not least in its group dynamics; this volume is charged beyond its internal pleasures not just because it might provide clues to the genesis of the SI but because it represents the only extensive contribution to the SI library written by a woman.

All of this begins to suggest the historical context in which Bernstein's book finally appears in English, in the somewhat flatfooted translation of John Kelsey ("I walk. Mainly I walk."). Because of its cult value, the book is condemned to expectations. What one thinks is likely to depend on what question one asks of the book. Radical tract, sly goof, period piece, anthropology of a movement, feminist apparition?

It is surely not the first; little is to be found of the SI's ascetic philosophical vitriol. Odile Passot's afterword has a go at the last possibility, misreading history to do so. Greil Marcus, who helped recover the book for English-speaking audiences in his landmark *Lipstick Traces* via a considered discussion of plot and style, as well as extensive interviews with the author, stands perplexingly accused along with everyone else for slighting Bernstein's novel out of gender bias. However, there is a kernel of truth in the umbrage; certainly the Situationist International was not entirely hospitable to women, leaving a blind spot in its radical vision. Debord may have been an equal-opportunity tyrant, but his willingness to let feminine beauty stand for something all but magical, even as he savaged the domination of appearance, is scarcely redeemable for all its familiarity. Bernstein points this out, rapier-quick: "Gilles is always the first one to notice the beautiful soul in a pretty girl." At the same time, the novel does not hesitate to objectify the poor saps batted about by Geneviève and Gilles: "Carole, being herself a poetic object, loved poetry."

This has the ring of insight, albeit one that comes from a position of self-certain superiority. In this, Bernstein is as glittering and empyreal as any of her cohort. Geneviève's temporary consort Bertrand is as easily dispatched: the self-styled poet "takes himself for an enfant terrible, and what's more, plans to write books that will still create shockwaves after he's dead and gone. He's very good looking." In short, he is the usual romantic youth, easy on the eyes and as shallow as he believes himself deep. The retrospective irony is that it would be the SI—not poets to speak of, but theorists and drunkards and *enragés*—who would create the shock waves reverberating down the century. This irony is repeated in the description of Carole's avocation: "What jumped out first in Carole's painting were its pleasantly stylish derivative qualities, not bold blunders of genius."

But if the foils, Bertrand and Carole, are so conventionally bohemian, might not one say the same of the story? Its promises of shock—amorous cruelty! lesbian encounters!—are little more than a comedy about mores and literary sensation. Indeed, there is something profound-

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ly and familiarly bourgeois about the whole scenario, wherein a true marriage of souls must divert itself with physical affairs lest the partners consume and then weary of each other. It is a French national story, played out everywhere from François Mitterrand's funeral (famously and calmly attended by wife and mistress) to the Claire Denis vampire film *Trouble Every Day*. In this regard, the tale is every bit as old-fashioned as the tunes Carole plays for the couple on her guitar, in a scenic garret. They are "classic songs: girls who are beautiful at fifteen, their boyfriends gone to war. Girls who lose a golden ring by the riverside, lamenting the passing of the seasons, who never give up on love. Girls who go into the woods, girls one misses later, at sea, and the voyage will never end."

These are volunteered as clichés, as romantic banalities. A lesser novel would surely offer us some competing vision of a more authentic life, the brawling and thrill-laden new. But this is not quite what happens; as we have seen, Geneviève and Gilles in many regards conform to equally empty myths. The new life is not on offer as an alternative. Rather, it is hidden within the old, the foolish—within Bertrand's desire, Carole's *chansons*. And the voyage will never end: this lie is surely the only truth, the promise of an endless adventure not lost to the deep past but hiding in the shallows of the present. It will require absolute demands; it will require oblivion.

This is the sense that haunts the book's contrived conventionality, poking through only momentarily. "Gilles offered to play another game of chess," Geneviève narrates at one point. "After he'd won, I told him he should teach Carole. And suddenly they were inventing a new game, completely mad: the value of each piece was subjective and changing, decided by the player with each move." This game is nothing but the drift itself. Its possibility, of another life that can be played within this one, is the book's secret.

To communicate this secret, the novel must be boring—must make the context in which such a vision makes sense. Its events are scarcely worth remembering; that's the point. In this it is far better written than Sagan's novels, which are stylish and diverting and rather modern in their sensibilities; such books wish only to be contemporary. *All the King's Horses* is absolutely modern: boring as the surface of administered life, Paris paused between Old World and New Wave, between manners and style. Within that infinitely flat moment, a secret adventure lurks almost in plain sight. It is visible only as the double of the terrible boredom of modernity, can reveal itself only within old songs and romantic notions, at the bottom of a shot glass. The book is familiar with everything, satisfied with nothing, hollowed out as life: "Vodka goes well with a wintery perspective. Nothing else evokes such presentiments of falling snow except, for some, the communist seizure of the state." But this presentiment is the end of desire, the moment of possibility. "We are partisans of oblivion," Bernstein wrote in an essay signed only with her picture, in December of 1958, evoking that same frozen contradiction, the Finland Station of the modern. This book is, in its way, the oblivion itself: what must be passed through, the doorway to which the absolute demand comes calling. "We forget the past, the present which is ours. We do not recognize our contemporaries in those who are satisfied with too little." ■

Answer

a moment of stillness,
demanding an answer.

When does a moment end?

*

Starbucks prayer,
"Make morning good again."

*

Leaf shadows on pavement:

word meaning to slide
carelessly,
repeatedly,
to absentmindedly caress.

*

For I so loved the world

that I set up
my only son

to be arrested.

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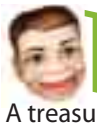
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Puzzle No. 3151

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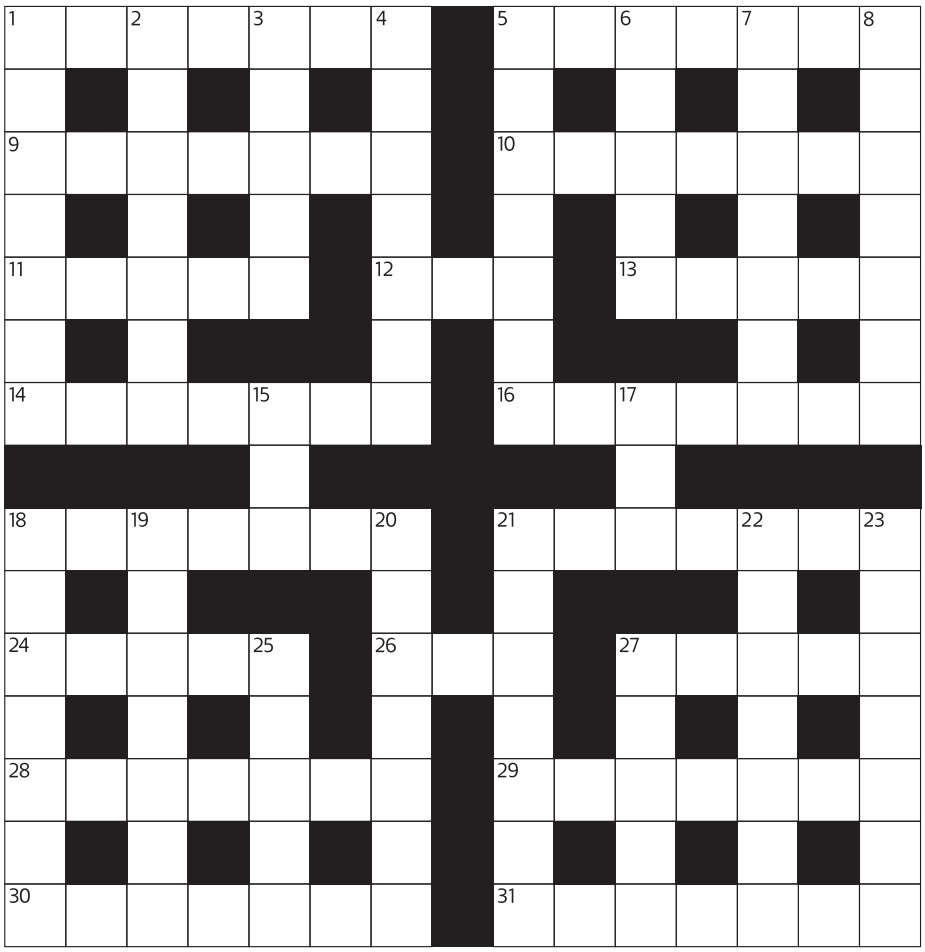

ACROSS

1 and **15** and **17** down Throw in a few more chips! (7,3,3)

5 See 3 down

9 Return one of the colors to the row which is sharper! (7)

10 Fancy building this! (7)

11, **12** and **13** What the detective and the shortstop might be expected to do and meet the answer. (5,3,5)

14 They don't offer much time for what started the scale long ago to be in the pits, but they might be taken from the meeting. (7)

16 Get me back on track, with your beginning to have a vicarious experience. (7)

18 One might hope such are well oiled, unless they typify those who praise fulsomely. (7)

21 You expect the wine not to be what the garden should be. (7)

24, **26** and **31** High fliers that could do lots of damage, although excellent for your hair! (5-10)

27 and **1** down That special space of yours. (5,7)

28 One typical of a whole class, with a slice of pie given to me. (7)

29 Has proven wrong when sleeping around—being somewhat embarrassed. (7)

30 Old Persian monarchs took the chair with what many a modern entertainer does. (7)

31 See 24

DOWN

1 See 27 across

2 Get on board, because 10 is confused over the downpour. (7)

3 and **5** across A choice offering around the end of October. (5,2,5)

4 Mailer's French conquerors. (7)

5 Possibly a fine result from books being so! (7)

6 One from Baghdad was famous—or infamous. (5)

7 How we are told certain truths may be, self-started. (7)

8 Possibly a duet, say—with the middle of the week approaching! (7)

15 and **17** See 1 across

18 Gets set about what the ship may say before its name, being set inside—and they may improve the fit. (7)

19 A second-year student starts to sit improperly, being somewhat of a thinker. (7)

20 Frequently found between two points, and makes things less hard. (7)

21 Wild talk about fighting? Vouch for it! (7)

22 They might be typified by the Ponderosa for some people, being operated by the revolutionary to the South. (7)

23 Desired wrongly to show what the mocker does. (7)

25 You can't say this girl doesn't have a hoard made up! (5)

27 Kinda stupid, in a Northeast way. (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3150

		B	A	C	K	N	U	M	B	E	R	S		
	A		N		E		G		O		A		J	
B	L	U	E	B	E	L	L		U	N	I	T	E	D
	L		C		P		Y		N		S		T	
D	O	O	D	L	E	D		A	D	V	E	R	S	E
	U		O		R		H		E				A	
S	T	A	T	E	S		A	G	R	O	N	O	M	Y
			E				L				A			
F	A	L	S	E	T	T	O		K	I	S	S	E	R
	N				H		S		A		H		N	
A	D	A	P	T	E	D		B	R	A	V	A	D	O
	E		I		A		A		A		I		I	
A	V	A	L	O	N		D	U	C	K	L	I	N	G
	E		O		T		A		H		L		G	
		S	T	R	E	A	M	L	I	N	E	D		

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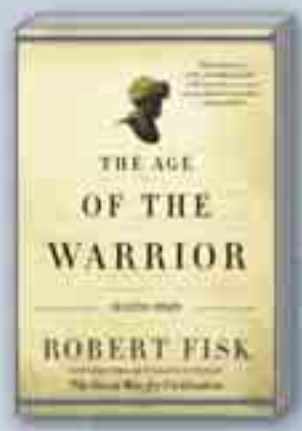

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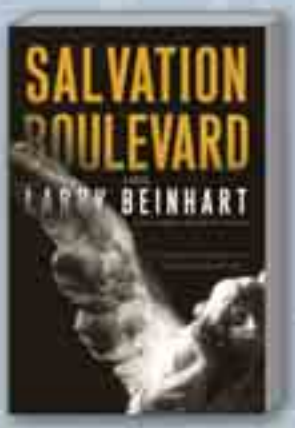

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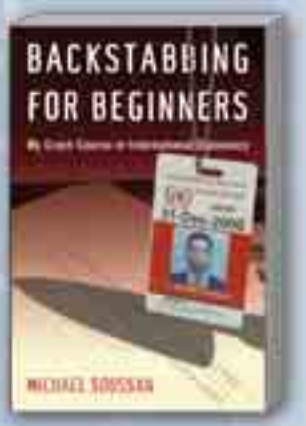

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